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ONLY A LOVE-STORY.

VOL. III.

ONLY A LOVE-STORY.

BY

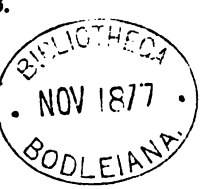
IZA DUFFUS HARDY,

AUTHOR OF

"GLENCAIRN," "NOT EASILY JEALOUS,"
"BETWEEN TWO FIRES,"
&c. &c.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.



LONDON:
HURST AND BLACKETT, PUBLISHERS,
13, GREAT MARLBOROUGH STREET.
1877.

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251. d. 940.

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ONLY A LOVE-STORY.

VOL. III.

ONLY A LOVE-STORY.

CHAPTER I.

"FROSTS OF AN HOUR—FRUITS OF A SEASON."

THE day after the ball Calla arose rather tired, and feeling, as usually happens, a little physical re-action from the exuberant enjoyment of the previous evening. The echo of the music had been ringing in her brain, the rhythm of the dance throbbing through her dreams all night. She arose regretfully to every-day life and every-day garb again, full of girlish anxiety to talk the past evening over with anybody or everybody. Having

treated Mrs. King to a glowing description of the whole entertainment, and a catalogue of the costumes, she went out to pay a visit to Netta Tregarne, and enjoy a *réchauffé* of the ball in conversation with some of her fellow-guests.

Returning from this visit, she found that Mr. Lusada had called and was in the drawing-room with her aunt. Now, as Mr. Lusada was expected to bestow his company on them that evening, and consequently had no especial inducement to call in the day time, Calla, although glad to see him, felt half disappointed, thinking, "He has come to say he cannot come to-night." This, however, was not his errand.

"I was hoping you would come back soon, for I've only a few minutes," he said, with his usual soft and courteous deference of voice and glad welcome of look to Calla. "As I have been telling Mrs. King I met Felix to-day. He's just back from

Greece. He wouldn't come on here with me. He had business in the City."

Over Calla's bright vivacity fell an instant shade of constraint. The smile with which she had greeted him did not fade, but completely changed its character. The frank and natural girl became an actress immediately.

"Oh, really? Why, I am surprised. I had no idea he was expected in town," she observed, leisurely pulling off her gloves, and untying her scarf, her mind full of only one wish—an ardent wish that her good aunt had not been there. She did not mind Lusada's presence, but she did not want a *woman's* eyes to be upon her, lest they should detect the bound her heart had given, and its flutterings now like a captured bird.

"No, I too was surprised to hear Felix was in town," said Mrs. King.

"I come of a tribe that's never surprised," said Lusada, in his most placid

accents. "Well, he couldn't come in with me now; but he said he'd look in this evening and see you all."

"Ah!—yes? That's nice. We shall all be at home," observed Calla, in the most placid accents also. She was conscious, and on her guard, and all she possessed of histrionic power—which was not much—she was putting forth now.

"I suppose you have had a delightful gossip with Netta, my dear?" said Mrs. King.

"Oh, yes, a delicious long chat—all about everything and everybody," replied Calla, most gaily.

Then they talked about the Tregarnes and the last night's ball, and nothing more was said of Felix.

It had become a custom that Calla always accompanied Lusada into the inner hall for a few words at parting. She followed him as usual after he had said good-bye to her aunt.

"Am I to come to-night?" he asked softly, not at all significantly or with ulterior meaning, but quite as a matter-of-fact inquiry concerning her will and pleasure.

Calla liked this, and answered in tones that were all sweetness, genuine, and not assumed,

"Yes, *of course.* Come early—as early as you can."

"I will," he said, and smiled, and lifted her hand and kissed it—his usual daily farewell—and left her.

She stood at the window watching him out of sight with fixed, abstracted eyes, that were scarcely conscious of seeing him. She understood Lusada's visit of preparation well; she understood Felix's "business in the City" too. She knew that not their own feelings, but hers, had been the predominant care in the minds of both, and that a look or a hint of hers was all that was needed to give either of them their cue

of conduct as regarded themselves and her. She smiled sadly, lovingly; but a deep sigh followed the smile.

She was uneasy all the day, longing to be alone, and yet shrinking from attracting attention by any unusual wish for solitude. She forced herself to keep up her usual calm, bright manner, in fact, not being a practised actress, rather overdid it by trying to seem calmer and brighter than usual. All the while her heart was beating fast and heavily, and as the evening drew near, fluttering faster and faster. How she wished its agitation would cease! but she could not force her heart to beat tranquilly, though she might school her voice, and call a smile to her lips. How long it seemed since the previous night! When she looked back to it, that brilliant evening seemed to lie half a world away.

Lusada was the first to make his appearance, and while he and Mrs. King and Mr. Yorke sat chatting, Calla now and then

put in a few words, and tried to follow the conversation, while her heart—apart and in suspense—was waiting—watching. A quarter of an hour, half an hour, an hour passed. But such hours always seem like months, and Calla thinks it must be midnight.

Remarks are made casually, "Where's Felix?" and, "Rather late, isn't he?" Calla smiles, begins to join more animatedly in the conversation, and gets more and more lively by fits and starts. All the time her whole soul is in her ears, listening for the sound of the door-bell—for the well-remembered footstep. "Will he come?"

An hour and a quarter. An hour and a half. She is quite pale, and feels faint with suspense now. "If he does not come, how shall I ever get through the night until to-morrow?" is her thought.

At last there is a ring at the bell, a foot, *his* step, upon the stairs. She collects her-

self together, rebellious against the throbbing of the heart she cannot control, resolved that she will not start, she will not flush, she will not pale. But in spite of these brave resolves her colour fades, her very lips are almost white, as Felix Grey enters the room.

He responds heartily to Mr. Yorke's hearty welcome; he answers Mrs. King's kindly greeting; then he shakes hands with *her*, and says, "How are you, Calla?" and then observes to Lusada, "Well, old fellow!"

That is all. Her part has been an easy one; it has simply been to reply to his inquiry that she is quite well; and so the meeting passes over in the most commonplace and matter-of-fact way. And now that it *is* over, and now that he has come, she is relieved and tranquillized at once. All the pain of suspense, all the sickening, suppressed agitation, have melted away and dispersed like a cloud, have dissolved

into the air and are no more. Her heart slackens back to its ordinary pulsation; the natural colour returns to her lips and cheek, the natural look to her candid eyes, now that the ordeal of meeting has passed, and passed so lightly.

"Where are you putting up, my dear boy?" Tom Yorke inquires, as paternally as if the once-upon-a-time plans were still in existence. *He* sees nothing at all uncomfortable in the situation. That "his little girl didn't hit it off with old Felix somehow," he is well aware; but he is not troubled by any doubts as to whether Felix may have any objection to seeing the prize carried off by some other fellow. They are both "right good fellows," and his daughter had a right to choose which she liked; and he never bothers himself with self-made difficulties of delicacy. Mrs. King's mind is not so thoroughly at ease. She recollects Calla's unaccountable burst of tears over her old lover's letter;

she never has quite understood Calla's change, and watches her now with carefully and delicately concealed curiosity, of which scrutiny the girl feels nevertheless aware in every nerve, though it does not annoy her so much as she would have fancied it must. Felix's presence is somehow strengthening and soothing.

"I'm in my old quarters," Felix replies to Yorke's friendly inquiry, "in Clarence Street."

"Ah, the old place? We have all encamped there in turn, haven't we? I passed it by the other day. How are they all?"

"'All that is left of them,' I find flourishing. Mrs. Smith's voice pervades the house very much in the old way, from garret to basement. The little dressmaker upstairs has become quite a feature in the establishment and set up a brass-plate on the door. The poor 'little Marchioness' is gone; and there's a big 'Marchioness,'

who deserves the title on account of her imposing presence—a dragoonish young woman whom it seems incongruous to see with a brush and dust-pan."

"And Miss Howard?" inquires Mrs. King.

"She is a fixture there, I think. Our landlady gives but a bad account of her, poor soul."

"And old Mr. Fletcher?" says Calla, testing her capacity for joining in the conversation gaily and easily, and coming off quite triumphantly successful.

"Gone—higher!—not the way of all flesh, but he has a rise in the world, and lives in a top-flat in Pimlico. I have been there one day and have had everybody's history already."

"You were always installed as the old lady's confidant," says Mrs. King, smiling at the reminiscences.

Felix Grey is not a whit changed, unless it be that his smile, gentle and genial

as ever, lights his face a shade more rarely. He is just the Felix of the old days, whose presence quietly and insensibly brightened up the lives of the lodgers in Clarence Street, and who strolled along the sands at La Basse-Rive talking theories, and holding forth on his own views of life in general, to Calla, choosing his topics and airing his political and theological opinions as if she had not been a woman young and fair—until the sense of the bloom and the beauty of this ripening womanhood had stolen softly over him; he had dropped a good many of his doctrines then, when fraternity lost itself in love! Yes, he was the same old Felix, unchanged, as she looked on him now.

He and Tom Yorke and Julius Lusada have naturally a great deal to say; these three wanderers by land and sea have all their recent travels to discuss, from Egypt to Oregon. Calla and Mrs. King sit quiet and listen with interest, and occasionally

offer a light, if a cigar in the warmth of discussion extinguishes itself, or replenish the wine-glasses when their contents get low.

Some difficulties are in direct opposition to the ordinary laws of perspective; they diminish as they near.

There is nothing more common and frequent than to see a situation that looked from a distance the acme of awkwardness and embarrassment, pass off with absolute ease; there is nothing more rare than to be able to realise beforehand the facility with which the difficulty that looks in the future so insurmountable will accommodate itself to the present.

Calla could not have believed that she could lounge so leisurely in her chair, calm not only in appearance, but in reality, no flush nor paleness now altering her cheek, no nervous quivering of her sensitive lips, smiling freely and frankly, between the old love and the new.

She is surprised at her own tranquillity; she cannot comprehend herself, she whose heart an hour ago was fluttering so rebelliously in her breast. It is like a dream to her to see Felix Grey and Julius Lusada together. It is neither a pleasure nor a pain, but strange and dream-like. They are solid flesh and blood, both of them, no doubt. Ghosts are not as a rule in the habit of tossing off full bumpers; and the occasional creak and tremor of the table bears witness to the materiality of the emphatic hands that in the heat of argument or narration come down upon it. There is nothing at all visionary or ghostly about them save that their being seen through curling clouds of smoke now and then obscures the outline of their features. But to see them together is so unreal to Calla that she keeps fancying she shall awake as from a dream.

What a contrast they are!—the one pale, sparely made, with no claim to beauty,

with the thoughtful eyes that have now (or is it only Calla's fancy?) a sadder, dreamier look; the other a type of splendid manhood. Yet the undefinable hall-mark of gentle birth and breeding that is on Felix Grey is not upon Lusada; but he does not need it. The bluest of *sang azur*, filtered through twenty generations, could not distinguish its owner more than this man is distinguished by his look and bearing. He carries himself with the conscious strength and pride of one who stands alone—who can afford to stand alone. It is the pride of strength, of a nature that "fear nor falsehood never knew," and to such a nature the open consciousness of power may be forgiven.

Of the warm friendship existing between the two men, now, as ever, utterly unchanged by any intervening circumstances, there is no room for doubt. Felix admires Lusada sincerely, appreciates ungrudgingly Lusada's gifts of person and presence, so

superior to his own, is his staunch and loyal ally in a friendship more level and equal than would seem on the surface easy to maintain with a man of Lusada's nature, powerful, self-asserting, and prone to lead. But Julius Lusada thoroughly reciprocates Felix's respect and admiration. He recognises the quiet, unexpressed strength of a nature whose will is as strong and resolute as his own, and he holds that he would be scarcely more safe in founding his faith upon a rock than in trusting Felix Grey.

The evening passes over Calla far more like a dream than a reality, until the hour of breaking up arrives. Then she wakes to reality, and with that reality to sore regret and pain, and craving longing. He is going; in a few minutes he will be gone from them; and she has scarcely spoken twenty words to him—has not exchanged one syllable of confidence, of memory, even of assurance of friendship. He has said his stay in London is uncer-

tain, probably will not be long; and now he is saying good night, is going—going without having had one moment's conversation aside or personally with her—going without one look of the old familiar friendship—going without a promise to come again soon.

She cannot bear this; she summons up courage suddenly, and advances to the charge. Are they not *friends?*—must they not be always friends?—why should she shrink so shyly and timorously from inviting an old friend? So she speaks out bravely and clearly.

"Come again soon and see us, Felix. We are almost always at home, some of us. We have not talked half our talk out to-night. You are to drop in again for another chat soon, mind. We shall expect you."

"I'll call and take my chance of finding you at home, then. Good night, Calla. You are looking well," and he regards her

with just that amount of attention which an old friend is privileged to bestow—no more than that—nay, scarcely so much. "Good night, old boy," he continues, holding out his hand to Lusada.

"I'm coming with you, my dear fellow; we go the same way," Lusada responds. And thus, in the circle of general "good nights," there are no special and particular leave-takings, and the two friends go off together like true and trusty comrades as they are.

Calla sat thinking, pondering, long and silently that night before she slept. She tried to wind off smooth the tangled skein of her own feelings, and tried in vain. The end of her perplexed reflections, the thoughts last in her mind, the words she last murmured to herself before she thrust thought away from her, and laid a tired head down on her pillow, were—

"Love—what is love? There can be no such thing as what we call 'true love'

in the world. True love can love but one, they say. Then either there is no such thing as this 'true love,' or else—which do I love? Love, solve the mystery, for *I* cannot!"

CHAPTER II.

"DUST ARE OUR FRAMES, AND GILDED DUST OUR PRIDE."

IF there was a question as to whether the old love or the new stood first with Calla, a doubt as to *which* she loved, or *how* she loved, there was no doubt at all as to the anxiety with which she looked for Felix to come again.

All the next day, and all the next, she waited for him, and grew pale with the eagerness of waiting, and the unceasing effort with which she disguised that eagerness. She looked back enviously and regretfully to the peace and pleasure she had enjoyed so lately. She thought of the passionate delight with which she had

flung herself into the present, and defied the past, only two nights before.

"I triumphed just a little before I was out of the wood, I'm afraid," she said to herself, with a sad little smile.

She longed for Felix to come; she craved to see him now with all the old gnawing craving that had slept for a long time. To see him—only to see him! Not to speak of love; not to forget how absolutely they were parted; not to dream even for a moment that they two could ever be lovers again. Only to see him, to meet in the old calm, tender friendship they had met in before the days of their love!—only to recall those days of friendship now! Even if they were but to meet for once, if their friendly words were but to be a farewell, she felt she must see Felix again. But in her heart, though it was so full of thoughts of Felix, Lusada was not lost sight of nor forgotten. She saw *him* on these days that she looked for Felix, and when he was

with her the longing to see and speak to that other man did not die, but slumbered for a time. Julius Lusada's manner to his betrothed had never been more tender and full of knightly chivalry and the noble deference of the stronger to the weaker than just at this time.

This is not lost upon her; she is all softness and sweetness to him, and Calla's softness is never assumed, her sweetness never false. She may act occasionally, act coldness and indifference when her woman's pride and caution are in arms. But she never profanes affection by acting or imitating it; her tones of love ring true; and Lusada knows this, and has no mistrust of her, whether he reads her heart quite clearly or not. Felix's name is never mentioned between them save in some casual and common-place allusion. "Felix and I dined with Godwyn at the Social Club last night," or, "I met Felix going in to his publisher's to-day with a

portentous-looking roll of manuscript under his arm."

If, however, Lusada takes Felix's return with perfect equanimity, it is a great deal more than he is expected to do by his London friends of this season. He and Calla would be amused if they could know with what interest their affairs are canvassed, and what entirely new lights are shed upon their mutual feelings. Felix Grey's coming back to London has been so unexpected that the first intimation thereof to the majority of his friends is his appearance among them in person.

It is one of the open evenings at the studio (Tregarne's, which among its *habitués* is so frequently spoken of as simply "the studio" that an outsider might be led to imagine there was no other existing apartment of that class). The studio general is more or less open "all night long and every day" literally, especially during the midmost hours of the night;

but this is one of the evenings on which it is a publicly understood thing that everybody will be welcome, whereas on other evenings everybody merely feels a tacit and comfortable confidence in the hospitality of the home in which, having once set foot, you feel, somehow, a kind of vested share thenceforth.

There are several old members of the circle gathered to-night, and a good many new ones. There is a sub-editor who really wields the thunders which are supposed to be called down by his principal, and to whom a callow poet, who has just had a small octavo volume published "for private distribution," is devoting himself; there is an American special correspondent taking notes on London society, which occupation he finds alike a lucrative, and a pleasant and congenial one, especially as it is enlivened by a flirtation with the vivacious Miss Hunter, who, being made aware of his line in life, is amusing herself by

enlightening him on British customs in a manner calculated to astonish her own compatriots far more than his.

There is "Flower Dorvil," with a camellia in his coat, not a rung higher up the ladder of Fame than he was when we knew him first—"too well-off and too good-looking ever to be anything but a drone!" so say the working bees who do not share the disadvantages of wealth and beauty.

There is Graham, meekest of men and sternest of critics, honey on his lips and gall at the tip of his pen, deferentially devoted to a fair and graceful, modest and Madonna-eyed lady whom everybody present knows—but whom the world in general does *not* know—to be the authoress of one of the most startling heterodox works of the age. There is Julius Lusada, perfectly at home there as elsewhere, occupying two chairs at once as only one to the manner born and bred can do; and there is

Arnold Godwyn, very happy in feeling himself now really behind the scenes.

As these are not supposed to be ladies' evenings, although there are not a few of the fairer sex present (who are all able and willing to "stand smoke"), the gentlemen are all smoking and looking serenely happy, "as only smokers can," when Felix Grey walks in. While he is greeted by exclamations in various keys of surprise and welcome, those few who knew him and Calla *en intime* repress one and all a desire to turn and watch the meeting between him and Lusada. Netta Tregarne particularly, who retains a surprising amount of romance and simplicity still, steps between them with almost as nervous a blush as if they had been rivals in the field of *her* affections, while Miss Hunter whispers to her special correspondent eagerly,

"Tell me, quickly—do your compatriots

carry six-shooters in their pockets and use them on small provocation?"

They note with some relief and more surprise that the rivals hail each other with an unmistakably hearty greeting, clasp hands in the most cordial way, have evidently only parted within the last few hours, and regard this meeting as an agreeably anticipated incident.

The common play of "the old love and the new," that play which at some time or another passes on almost every stage—which is sometimes so light a burlesque, and sometimes so dark a tragedy, and occasionally begins as the one, and just ere the curtain's fall, shifts startlingly into the other—has been enacted over and over again in this circle. It is nothing so new to them as to inspire them with any especial curiosity, but that now one of the actors on the scene is new to them, and thus lends a new interest to the old, old play. Moreover, they have one and all

conceived an erroneous and one-sided view of Lusada, and look upon him as a nineteenth-century incarnation of Othello and the Giaour, a delightful friend, but a most undesirable rival. Nor has the fact of Felix Grey's being an old friend and comrade of his held a very prominent place in their minds, for as a rule with unnecessary delicacy and caution they have avoided talking much of Felix before him.

His compatriot, the newspaper correspondent, is meanwhile regarding Lusada as decidedly an acquisition to the evening; looking on him with a professional eye, and having received from Miss Hunter a brief synopsis of the current version of his biography, he decides that the subject of it will work very well into his next week's letter.

"I would put it under the head of 'The Brigand Leader in the British Drawing-room,' if I were you," the young lady sug-

gests, confidentially, with mischief in her eyes; "and could you not get in something touching about the proud plumes of the American Eagle being smoothed by the velvet paw of the British Lion? He is very popular among us—in fact, I believe he is going to marry one of us."

"Which one, may I inquire?"

"You may inquire; but if you mean to make a note of it for publication, why, you'll inquire of me in vain."

"But if I do not inquire for that purpose?" he rejoins gravely.

"Then if you only ask from personal curiosity, why, I'll tell you. First of all, it's not *me*. It is one of our gallery of beauties—the original of that portrait—the middle one there."

Miss Hunter's interest suddenly wanders from her correspondent, as she perceives Felix Grey and Julius Lusada side by side, contemplating the life-size portrait

of Calla, which occupies a prominent place in the aforesaid "gallery of beauties."

"You recognise that?" observes Lusada, drawing Arnold Godwyn's attention to it. Mr. Godwyn does indeed recognise it—thinks it charming.

"The eyes are certainly wonderfully like," remarks Felix.

"You know Miss Yorke?" inquires Godwyn, conversationally.

"Yes, I have known all the family for many years."

Miss Hunter, catching this fragment of conversation, and determined that, if there is anything interesting going on, she will be in it, deserts her cavalier abruptly, joins the picture-gazing group, and begins,

"You remember when that was being painted, Mr. Grey?"

"Perfectly—it was when I last came back from America."

"It has seized her expression well, hasn't it?" says Lusada.

"Yes—there is a good deal of latent force about it, with all its feminine grace," rejoins Mr. Godwyn.

"She looks very girlish there; she has altered a good deal, but I think it's for the better. So much more depth and thought in her face," Miss Hunter observes, with some admiration, but more calm criticism, she being a young lady who so invariably speaks her mind that she has long ere now forgotten to consider whether the frank unfolding of her mind will be agreeable to her listeners.

"She has altered," admits Felix slowly, looking with unconscious earnestness on the picture of the girl whose smile is very sunshine, whose face radiates the living light of a fresh, cloudless, careless youth. Will Tregarne may well regard this portrait as one of his masterpieces. He has seized in her fearless eyes and

frank smile the very incarnation of youth and hope and joy. "She has altered," says Felix.

"Has she?" rejoins Lusada, glancing at him with a sort of quick, keen inquiry. Then he too bends a long, earnest look on the picture, and observes, half to himself and half to Felix,

"If she has, it's just such a change—and only such a change—as in Undine after the soul was breathed into her."

Miss Hunter is not meant to hear these aside-spoken words, but her quick ear catches them, and her free and ready tongue reports them afterwards to Netta Tregarne.

"Yes," Netta responds thoughtfully, "that's true enough. I have noticed just that change in Calla myself. But I wonder—at *whose* call was it that the soul awoke?"

Arnold Godwyn, being there on Lusada's

introduction as Lusada's friend, leaves when he leaves, and knows never a word of any possible past, present, or future rivalry between Felix Grey and Julius Lusada. He thinks Grey a charming fellow, and having lately enjoyed one of his books, is delighted to know the author.

So it happens one day soon, that Lusada's information to his betrothed is,

"Arnold Godwyn has asked Felix down to the Grange; I guess he'll be going next week."

"Next week?" rejoins Calla, quickly and inquiringly; for it is "next week" that Miss Godwyn has named in her invitation to Mr. and Miss Yorke to spend a few days at the Grange, Julius Lusada, of course, being of the party.

"Yes; he can get away from London on the Saturday evening, and stop at Godwyn's till Monday. We'll be there then, you know," he remarks easily, but half

interrogatively—as if it were in the least degree necessary to remind her of the fact so prominent in her mind!

"Yes," she assents, with mild indifference.

He looks at her for a moment half hesitatingly, but quite frankly and trustfully, and then says,

"It's all the same to you, my little lady, isn't it?—you don't mind?"

"Mind? Not the least in the world!" she assures him, earnestly and simply, only changing colour a little; and she raises her eyes to meet his freely.

Those deep clear eyes of hers might move even the stoutest sceptic in woman's truth to relent—if only for the moment—into the faith of Pericles,

"Falseness cannot dwell in thee."

As to Lusada, although he has uttered misogynist sentiments in his day, and when the mood moves him—(which is not often,

for his normal frame of mind and body is healthy and robust)—can occasionally pose in a Byronic attitude of general distrust in the truth of womankind, yet somehow no shadow of that distrust has ever crossed his mind concerning this one girl. She is conscious of this; she observes with a sort of tender and half-puzzled wonder that this man who has lived through twenty histories in his span of existence—and half the records of whose erratic and tempestuous life are sealed books to her—holds in her a trust as transparent and simple and absolute as that of a boy in his first fresh dream of romance. She smiles as she twines her fingers lightly in her tame lion's tawny mane, and feels a delicious sense of security in her influence over him—an influence which nevertheless is by no means empire. The chains which bind her to him would not hold her so fast and firm did she not recognise in him a master-spirit. No Cleopatra would ever hold such

full supremacy over the heart of *this* Antony as that

> "His sword, made weak by his affection, would
> Obey it on all cause."

He will be her head, her lord, and her leader most literally; possibly in coming days somewhat her tyrant too, for the despotic nature will assert itself in the fondest love when once pursuit has given way to possession. But he will never wound her with a doubt nor insult her with a suspicion.

So on the appointed day, in perfect peace and comfort, Lusada accompanies his *fiancée* and her father down to Godwyn Grange.

This, the home of past and present Godwyns, is a grand and grey old seventeenth-century house, lying in the midst of its own broad undulating lands of sloping sward and scattered trees. There is not so much timber on the Godwyn estate as there was a couple of generations back;

but there is still enough to perfect the picture of the old Grange standing grand and solitary in the midst of its own grounds; and the mortgage under which a part of that beautiful park-land lies is not a visible fact that affects the landscape at all. The east wing of the house has been re-built in modern days; but the present Godwyns have had the ivy trained so thickly over it, and its frontage so altered and thrown forward to correspond with the west wing, that only the gables disclose the difference of age.

It is one of the hundreds of old family mansions that look haunted with histories, as if in the silence of night the very walls could whisper strange stories. In point of fact, Godwyn Grange *has* a good many histories, from that of the two brothers who enlisted under the opposite banners and both fought and fell at Marston Moor, to a more modern story which the family are not so fond of telling.

Calla was charmed with the old mansion, from the moment that she crossed its threshold, and stood in the great, dim, shadowy hall, with bars of coloured light from the high, narrow, stained-glass windows falling across the dark oak floor, with heavy time-blackened panelling and faded frescoes on the walls, and a huge massive staircase with carven balustrades that took up half the width of the back of the hall, and cast the dining and drawing-room doors into deep shade and comparative insignificance.

It was something new to Calla—all the life at Godwyn. She enjoyed the atmosphere of wealth and comfort and quiet, for the present Godwyns were not numbered among those prudent ones who prepare for a possible distant failing in their fortunes by a gradual and cautious reduction beforehand. They would live in their old accustomed style to the last, and if the time ever came that they must fall, they

would fall at once from the full height, having drained the cup to the last drop.

They were a somewhat mixed party at the Grange this week. Besides the head of the family, Arnold Godwyn, his elder sister and younger brother, and Mrs. George Godwyn, their widowed aunt—a gentle, shadowy, undemonstrative kind of woman, who glided through life without seeming to set any mark upon it—there were the Bertrams, a little man who was cleverer than he looked, and had travelled half round the world, with a tall, pale, graceful bride, who wrote poetry, and set her own songs to music, and sang them, and had the reputation of being cleverer than she really was; there were the Egertons, a perfectly characterless and nondescript couple, of the purest of *sang azur*, however; and there was Miss Wroughton, an heiress, plain of feature, soberly splendid of attire, quick of wit, and, sooth to say, a little sharp of tongue.

The first and the last of these guests had been selected as being suitable and congenial acquaintances for Lusada and his *fiancée*; the Egertons, older friends, had been thrown in for old acquaintance sake to make up the party. The Godwyns themselves found more congenial spirits in their new friends than in their old. They all liked anything out of the common way, worshipped at the shrine of the picturesque, and cherished a special weakness for art and literature.

Was not the drawing-room table ornamented with a gorgeously bound and gilt and elaborately illustrated volume of verse, published by Arnold Godwyn before he was five-and-twenty?—and were not the walls hung round with water-colour landscapes washed in by his sister Emily? They had just the amount of talent that goes a long way in the circle where it reigns alone, but is scarcely strong enough to battle in the crowded lists of the world,

where the blows ring so sharply on the stoutest shield.

At Godwyn Grange now, among the little party collected there, Julius Lusada was certainly the conspicuous and central figure—a picture dashed in with broader touches and brighter colours, if cruder and less highly finished, than those around. He moved among them like the embodiment of the unruly exuberance of strength, the untamed force, of the great New World—he was as the outcome and product of a chaos of conflicting powers broken free, of the cauldron where struggling forces seethe and bubble, from which tempestuous travail may yet rise a future as glorious as any born of earth. From such clash and conflict there fly up ever and anon sparks of pure human force as if to prophesy the power that shall be.

Faulty and real and human, with no touch of spirituality or transcendentalism about him, Lusada—fresh from a wild and

lawless life in lands yet only half reclaimed from barbarism—(he had always fled from cities to the backwoods and the prairie)—stood now in the Old World, in a home hallowed by historic association, where generations of pure descent had lived and died, tradition clinging about its walls, reverence for the Past breathing in its very air—stood proud and strong in his uncultured native power, unabashed by this close contact with a life of which luxury and refinement were not merely the graces, but the natural elements, conscious and confident in the genius of that force which makes the Chief wherever the Cause shall call, that force which we cannot degrade by entitling it merely physical, yet far too fully charged with bare personal magnetism to be called simply spiritual or intellectual.

Looking at him as he moves among the rest, Calla feels proud of her lover, and

her quick feminine instinct detects with some amusement the aspect in which Mrs. Egerton and Mrs. Bertram view him—as a remarkable specimen of a rare, and, indeed, hitherto almost unknown species, not unattractive, but probably dangerous, and certainly to be studied from a distance with care and caution.

"Are *all* Americans like that?" inquires Mrs. Bertram languidly, lightly waving her fan in his direction, he being at a safe distance.

"If they are," says Miss Wroughton briskly—she is a young lady with an eye for the picturesque—"I shall spend my next season in New York."

"Don't take your Transatlantic ticket under that delusion, Miss Wroughton," says Mr. Bertram. "You are almost as likely to find a man like that in the Old World as in the New. It is individuality, not nationality, that makes him what he

is, if I may judge by my slight acquaintance with him and his country, where once I spent some weeks."

"Scarcely long enough to exhaust the list of national and individual types from North to South, and East to West, I should fancy," responds the young lady.

"I did not take you through the gallery yesterday, I think, Miss Yorke?" Miss Godwyn is observing to Calla. "Would you like to look at the pictures now?"

"Very much," Calla replies promptly, and rises to follow her hostess. Lusada follows too—not but that he has long ago looked at every picture in the gallery. Robert Godwyn comes also, to assist his sister in doing *cicerone*, and to have as much as possible of the company of Lusada, for whom he entertains a boyish hero-worship, and of Calla, whom—she being some years older than himself—he is, of course, rapidly installing on the

pedestal of his youthful fancy, which has now been vacant nearly five weeks.

The collection of pictures at Godwyn Grange is worth looking at, although it comprises no especial rarities. In the neighbourhood it is considered the thing to be seen; and the Godwyns are proud of it, and justifiably so, for there certainly is not such a collection for many miles round. There is one of Turner's early landscapes, a delicious warm bit of Autumn woodland; and a group of cattle by Morland; hard by these hangs a soft bronze-eyed southern beauty of Murillo's; then there is a Gainsborough, and a large, fair, calm woman, with the placid "ox-eyes" of a Juno, concerning which there is some doubt as to whether it is or is not a genuine Rubens. There are acknowledged copies of masterpieces, which in the eyes of Lusada and Calla are just as satisfactory to contemplate as the originals, although she at

least has the worldly wisdom to conceal this fact. Last, not least, there are the family portraits, from the time of the first Stuarts down to the present generation.

Emily Godwyn, with her soft quiet presence, her brown braided hair, her simple rich morning dress of some Quaker-coloured stuff, points out one after another her ancestors and ancestresses, giving names, dates, and scraps of anecdote in her gentle measured voice in a matter-of-fact way, standing calm and almost indifferent amongst these shadows of the dead whose blood runs in her veins to-day, who perhaps in their living strength stood on this spot just as she stands now, this very day, this very hour, a century and more ago. Calla, who is unconscious of possessing ancestors, is far more impressed by this assembly of family portraits than is the descendant of this long roll of the departed. Young Robert Godwyn also lounges along perfectly coolly, and takes a good

deal more interest in the visitors to whom he is assisting to exhibit the family glories than in the exhibition.

"I know all the old fellows by heart by this time," he observes. "To my mind, there's only one of them really worth looking at—that's our beauty, Lady Alithea; she married my great-uncle."

Lady Alithea is a blonde beauty. With her golden hair and her great dreamy eyes, her attire all a soft harmony of fawn and brown, she smiles from the canvas in the immortal loveliness that Sir Joshua Reynolds has handed down to posterity. Most of the Godwyns are dark, only here and there fair locks and blue eyes shine out. Fair Lady Alithea's fame as the beauty is little assailed by any rival ladies of Godwyn race. They do not appear, on the whole, to be a family distinguished for any extreme personal beauty, although, no doubt, the artists have done their best for them. The men, as a rule, have finer and stronger

faces than the women, or else the salient characteristics of the masculine features have been more easily seized and had fuller justice done to them.

Here are the two brothers who fell at Marston Moor; one is a dark and handsome boy, with great black eyes in which, in some lights, you seem to catch the fire-flash even now, with raven love-locks waving from under his cavalier hat, with jaunty cloak and sword-knot; the other is paler, older, fairer, sombre and colourless, in his Puritan garb. At this Puritan brother Calla gazes with a half-perplexed attention.

"Somehow that face seems not altogether unfamiliar to me?" she observes slowly. "What is there about it that I recognise?" Then the answer flashes across her mind suddenly. "Why, surely," she says, "it is like Felix! Look, Julius, don't *you* see a reminiscence of Felix there?"

"Why, now you mention it, I fancy I do, but it never occurred to me to trace any resemblance before. Do you notice, Miss Emily, any reminiscence of my friend Felix Grey in this ancestor of yours?"

"Of Mr. Grey?" says the lady doubtfully. "Well, really I cannot say I notice any likeness; but I am never good at tracing likenesses. When he comes we can compare him feature by feature with Clement Godwyn."

"It is not the features that are alike," observes Calla, still gazing into Clement Godwyn's calm, earnest face, and the deep and somewhat hollow eyes. "Except just the outline of the lower part of the face, the features are not at all similar; but the expression is wonderfully like Felix Grey's."

"Yes, I see it is, somehow," agrees Lusada easily and comfortably, turning a last casual glance towards the picture as

he saunters on, and not deeming it a matter of the slightest significance.

"There is a wonderful likeness to our Puritan ancestor in the portrait of my uncle Percy," observes Miss Godwyn.

"About the only likeness there was between them, I should guess," suggests Robert with an irreverent smile.

"That's Percy Godwyn who was lost in the *Calypso?*" says Lusada, as Miss Godwyn turns a slightly reproachful look towards her brother.

"Yes. I do not recollect him, of course, but I believe this portrait is very like."

"It is like, though of course he had altered a good deal when I saw him," observes Lusada.

"Ah, to be sure; I forgot that you two had met in your wanderings," rejoins Emily Godwyn.

"Met and parted, and only discovered our cousinship just before we drifted apart," remarks Lusada, whose memory is

tenacious as to the fact of his distant connection with the Godwyns.

"This was taken just before he went abroad," the lady continues. "You see the likeness of feature to our Puritan ancestor, do you not, Miss Yorke?"

"Indeed a very strong likeness. And—" Calla checked herself suddenly; she had been about to add that she recognized again a vivid reminiscence of Felix, only an unaccountable shyness stopped her. Somehow she could not utter Felix's name then, when Miss Godwyn and Lusada both happened—by mere chance—to be looking full at her. She was not blushing, but she knew, by certain instinct, that if she spoke that name then, under their eyes, it would bring the blood in an instant burning red to her cheeks, and she would not risk this. Yet, although she said nothing, she was struck more than ever by the resemblance to Felix in this pictured face of Percy Godwyn, and she wondered that both the

others did not also exclaim about it. But her eyes on this subject were keener, her interest warmer, than theirs.

In the tall and stalwart young figure of Percy Godwyn, pictured life-size and full length, with his arm flung over the neck of his favourite horse—in the dashing, careless, haughty grace of the attitude—in the black curling hair and the large light-blue eyes, contrasting with the darkness of that hair—there was no reminiscence of Felix to be traced. It was something in the firm curve of the lips; the mould of the chin and brow; something in the expression, too—although in Percy Godwyn's face, as the artist had seized and interpreted the expression, the earnestness, the tenacity, the resolution and thoughtfulness that characterised both the portrait of Clement Godwyn, and the face of Felix Grey, lay latent, and to some extent veiled and thrown into the background by the frank boldness of those bright young blue eyes, the half

audacious, half cynical smile, on the firm lips barely shaded by the boyish moustache.

"It is a very fine face," observed Calla to her youthful admirer, Robert, as they lingered a few moments there, while Miss Godwyn and Lusada passed on to the portraits of the present generation.

"Isn't it just?" responded Robert emphatically. "I wish he'd lived in *my* day! He and I would have got on together, I know. He was our prodigal and wanderer, you see—my grandfather regarded him as degenerate, and I think Emily's inclined to the same idea. But I look upon him as a brick. What fellow would stop mewed up here, when he had a thorough good chance opened to him of starting a free new life, with a new world before him? I say, Miss Yorke, that's *my* portrait that Emily is pointing out now. I shall cut it!"

So saying, the young gentleman retired modestly into the background, while Miss Godwyn, assuming, with an amused smile,

the air of a show-woman, as she noted her brother's withdrawal, began,

"Here you behold the youngest of the family, the budding hope of the race, on whom we build——But where has the original vanished?—just as I was about to seize the opportunity of inculcating a moral lesson!"

CHAPTER III.

"HAD WE NEVER LOVED SO KINDLY!"

IT is Saturday evening; the dinner-bell is shortly expected to ring, and all the party at Godwyn Grange, both household guests, and guests from the outside world, have assembled in the drawing-room in readiness for the summons, except Miss Yorke. Miss Yorke, however, is not going to be late; she is already leisurely descending the broad oak steps of the great staircase; nor is there any reason for her tardiness, beyond the attention she has been bestowing on a new kind of coronet in which she has arranged her hair.

She pauses in the hall, to cast a final glance over her shoulder at the train of her

dress, and assure herself that it trails a proper number of inches behind her, also to wonder whether Felix is come. He is expected that evening to dinner, she knows. He will certainly be there, unless any unexpected circumstances have prevented him. She has only to turn the handle of the drawing-room door, and she will in all probability find herself face to face with him. There is not the slightest cause for embarrassment, the ordeal of her *first* meeting with him since the old days has passed, and passed over smoothly, without hitch or jar; none of the party here can have any knowledge of that brief season during which he and she were plighted lovers, so there can be no curious eyes bent on her now. Yet she pauses, hesitates even in the shadow of the arched doorway, wonders whether, mingled in the deadened hum of voices that murmur faintly through the thick oak panels she can catch any tone of his voice. At last she opens the

door with an unusually quick, firm turn of the handle, and walks in, looking her loveliest and proudest, with her head held high, a light flush warming up her usually cream-pale cheek, no drooping nor wavering in the brave bright eyes that rove slowly and steadily round the room and fix on Felix's face.

There are others standing between them; he is occupied in conversation, so that they cannot meet and speak at once. He bows as he catches her eye; and she bends her head with a smile. Their eyes only meet for that moment; yet as he continues listening with apparent earnest attention to what Mr. Bertram is saying, his mind's eye has only scope for one image; his vision is filled still with that brief glimpse of Calla, splendid in the ripened bloom of her young, yet queenly, beauty, not fragile, not ethereal, proud, pure, and strong, an embodiment of fair and sweet healthy human loveliness. Just for the

moment, seeing her in this bright bloom, he is conscious of only one wild wish—that there rolled a whole world of sea between him and this one woman whose face thus

"seen, became a part of sight."

Calla meanwhile glances round the room with a general smile, and passes on leisurely from group to group, pausing here and there for a word, a greeting.

Although there are some additional guests to-night, the party that would have looked large elsewhere seem like a scattered few lost in the great drawing-room of Godwyn Grange. Everything there is on a large scale—the broad couches and ottomans make the ladies sitting thereon look *petite* and diminutive, even though they are normally of majestic presence; and in the deep arm-chairs their occupants sink down and are lost to view. There are two clergymen added to the party to-night, with their wives and daughters, and a

stray bachelor or two, Not only thus is the party larger than usual, but livelier than usual. Everyone is talking about the day's news—the declaration of war between France and Prussia; in every discussion this subject seems to be figuring, in one form or another. There is Mrs. Bertram, pale and poetic as usual, with lilies in her hair, carrying on a languid conversation with one of the new guests, in which it appears she thinks it must be so beautiful to be a nurse in an ambulance and tend the wounded. There is Tom Yorke paying devoted attention to one of the clergyman's daughters who happens to be pretty, an *ingénue* in book-muslin and curls, who is enjoying the sweet incense of flattery, even though it is offered by a middle-aged man and a widower, and assumes the form of recognition of a congenial spirit, to whom he can pour forth in confidence his views on the war-question, secure in her intellectual appreciation and

feminine sympathy. This view of herself is gratifying and new to the young lady, and she listens well-pleased. There are Felix Grey and Mr. Bertram deep in conversation on another branch of the general subject; and hard by there is Miss Wroughton nothing much to look at in herself, but perfectly dressed, in amber silk that suits her brunette complexion, and diamonds sparkling wherever jewels can be placed, from her chignon down to her shoe-buckles. Lusada is at her side, bending his head down to the diamond butterfly that flashes and quivers its wings from her hair. They too began with the day's news, but they have now fled from European to Transatlantic complications.

"We are discussing national characteristics, Miss Yorke," observes Miss Wroughton as Calla draws near. "Mr. Lusada is conveying to us benighted islanders the humiliating conviction that in *his* country

heroes are even as the sands upon the sea-shore."

"Mute inglorious Miltons and guiltless Cromwells, is that so?" says Calla gaily. "Well, never having been there, I can't say; but my suggestion would be—'Put not your trust in—patriots!'"

Felix, standing close by, turns at the sound of the clear, laughing voice, and holds out his hand in a common-place and casual greeting; and just for a second Calla's fingers rest lightly in his. Miss Wroughton does not dream that these two have ever been anything to each other, and although she draws Calla away from Felix in conversation with her and Lusada, it is not from the slightest suspicion of any possible awkwardness in the situation crossing her mind, but from a kindly desire to tacitly assure Miss Yorke—who, she supposes, being a young *fiancée*, is probably easily jealous—that *she*, Harriet Wroughton, with

growing thousands lying idle in the funds, who has never yet failed to win a man on whom she chose to fix her attention, has no designs on Miss Yorke's property. Miss Wroughton does not underrate her own powers of attraction; indeed, she has found conquest so much too easy hitherto that she somewhat undervalues its gratification. In the present case, though she finds something pleasantly novel about Julius Lusada, she has not the least intention of interfering with Calla's peace of mind, and wishes to make this evident.

At dinner, Felix's place is nearly opposite Calla. They have barely exchanged a word hitherto, and have no opportunity now. They drift apart into different currents of conversation; she is gay and lively, bandying bright repartee, and fencing with light laughter with Lusada and her other neighbour. Felix is engaged in a discussion on foreign and home politics—which in their present martial aspect are naturally now

the centre of all interest, as none know how far the tide of war being once let loose may flow—with Mr. Bertram and Arnold Godwyn, a discussion which gradually attracts the attention of those around and draws others into the field. By the time several courses have gone round, however, although this discussion holds possession of the whole table, nearly all save the host and Felix Grey are merely playing the *rôle* of attentive audience, Mr. Bertram and his supporters having temporarily retired from the field with silenced guns. Felix can talk well when he chooses, and eventually he becomes master of the field, not that he has by any means convinced or converted any of his adversaries, but he has had the best of the fight.

Calla watches him, listens to him, never joins in the argument by so much as a word, nor manifests even by a look or a smile approval or dissent; but he has no

other such staunch ally following his standard in enthusiastic confidence as the girl opposite him who looks so cool and quiet and even uninterested. Lusada has scarcely been long enough in England, or studied the various European governments deeply enough to hold a post on the ground these discussions occupy; and where Julius Lusada cannot march forward in the confidence of conquering he never challenges the fight. He is of too haughty and dominant a nature to lightly risk defeat by striking spear on shield for an encounter in unknown lists with unaccustomed weapons.

So in this discussion Calla has only Felix to follow in silent and exclusive attention, only Felix's argument to echo and uphold in her heart, if not with her lips, only Felix's opinion to cherish as her own, nay, more tenaciously than her own, thenceforth, in as childlike a faith even now as in the departed days.

It seems wonderful that things can be so changed since then when *he* is so little altered. How often she has seen him look, heard him speak—when he was "wound up and set going" on some one of his favourite theories—exactly as he is looking and speaking this evening! There is something pleasant and restful in the atmosphere of that familiar presence—in the sound of the low, quiet tones, that with all their occasional softness of modulation, cut home with such deliberate incisive clearness at some points of the argument—in the sight of the firmly outlined thoughtful face, the earnest, steadfast eyes—eyes that can soften and flash and dream, *she* knows—but who else can know it here?

When from the diplomatic, retrospective, and national characteristic phases of politics, they move on to the military aspect of the campaign, then Julius Lusada comes to the front, and, as usual, sweeps all before him, not so much, perhaps, by

clearness of logic or subtlety of argument as by a kind of infectious force and enthusiasm. There being no military men present, too, he has it all the more his own way. In generalship it is evident that he would play the boldest game, and tactics would not be his forte. It would be less his mission to lay out the far-reaching plan of the campaign, to map out the engineering works, to hold an inactive resistance against a long and tedious siege—than to lead the forlorn hope, to take the fort by storm, to dash down the Valley of Death right on the levelled guns, as in the immortal charge that was "magnificent, but not war!"

In the evening the chiefly interesting topic seems to have exhausted itself, or it does not thrive in the sedative after-dinner atmosphere of the drawing-room, where there is a little music, a little chit-chat, a good deal of lounging lazily over photograph albums and collections of dried

flowers. Presently the majority of the gentlemen begin to drop away one by one to the billiard and smoking-rooms, leaving only one or two of rare chivalry to brighten up with their presence the matrons and the maids. Lusada and Felix are neither of them among this chivalrous minority. But Felix and Calla have had a few words together, a very few, although he has not appeared to avoid her, and she certainly has taken no pains to steer clear of him.

So he has politely opened a heavy album for her; they have laughed together at some passing jest, and exchanged a friendly word of good night as he followed in Lusada's steps towards the smoking-room.

This kind of ordinary meeting and light, pleasant intercourse, without any scenes of agitation to mar it, is just what she had thought to herself she wished for. So now she had her wish. Yet that night as she lay awake and watched the faint silvery starlight strike in and glimmer on the

panels of the window-frames, and the odd deep shadows the night-lamp cast about the old-fashioned, long, low wainscoted room, and heard the owls hooting from their nests in the ivy outside, she tossed about on her pillow restlessly, troubled and disturbed, feeling sad and sick at heart, and yet not knowing exactly what troubled her. She could not disentangle her confused feelings; one thing only was clear —that from the moment Felix Grey had crossed her path again, his presence—the mere sight of him—had struck through the fragile shield she had erected between her and the past, shivered that thin, smooth surface tranquillity into atoms, utterly as a shell shatters a clear crystal pane. She was happy, she told herself, very happy; who should be happier than she? whose prospects showed more fair? Happy she was, in truth; happy as mortal woman awoke from her first dawning

dream to life and noon can be, hopeful as youth at the gates of a fair future should be—but the peace, the serenity she had lately enjoyed was broken.

The next day was Sunday; after breakfast came church; after church came luncheon; after luncheon some of the guests strayed up to the gallery, Julius Lusada, Calla, and Felix among them. She had spoken scarcely ten words to Felix that day; at meal-times they had been far apart; in the church expedition she had joined the driving and he the walking party. Now in the gallery, as they sauntered along criticising Cavalier and Roundhead, Reynolds and Gainsborough, she went frankly to his side.

"Do you know, Felix," she said, "I have discovered a likeness to you in two of these portraits? See, that young Puritan over there—Clement Godwyn, who was killed fighting for the Common-

wealth,—move this way and you will get a better light. Now, don't you see a reminiscence of yourself?"

"It must be a distant one," he observed, "not that I am a fair judge, for a man doesn't study his own features much as a rule, unless he's an Adonis. But I don't think, Calla," he added, with his quiet smile, "that you're flattering the Puritan soldier."

"But there is a likeness of *you* there, Felix, that's a fact," interposed Lusada. "I notice it more now you're here. Look at that mouth and chin!"

"The other portrait, of that uncle of Miss Godwyn's, is even more like, I think," said Calla, and on to the other portrait they moved.

Felix looked at it, indifferently enough, though with a light passing curiosity. As the artist had portrayed it, making no doubt the best of every beauty, it looked too bright and handsome a face for him to

plead guilty to recognising a likeness in it to himself; but he did recognise it, and noticed it the more the longer he looked.

Miss Wroughton noticed it too; Mrs. Bertram did not think it was at all like; Mr. Yorke agreed with her, but on Calla's pointing out the resemblance, he was won to acknowledge a certain reminiscence in the outline of the lower part of the face.

"That was the black sheep of the family, wasn't it?" said Miss Wroughton, waxing thus free in her comments as none of the family were present. On somebody's hazarding an answer in the affirmative, she continued, "One might imagine so—he's good-looking enough. I like black sheep."

"Thanks for myself and brethren," observed Tom Yorke.

"If beauty be a test of blackness," remarked Mrs. Bertram, "I scarcely think Mr. Percy Godwyn handsome enough to merit the evil reputation."

"Poor Percy Godwyn's chief blackness in British eyes, I guess," said Lusada, "consisted in his running away to the other side of the world and never coming back. He was a right good fellow in his way—he had his faults."

"What kind of faults?" inquired Calla.

"Just such as perhaps you would have been least inclined to pardon, lady mine," he said, smiling.

"Did you know him, then?" asked Mrs. Bertram, languidly curious.

"As one knows hundreds of fellows whose paths cross ours for a day. Fate flung us together once for a little time. We weren't intimate; we were neither of us of the stuff that makes friendships very readily. When we found out there was a connection between our families, not such a very distant one either, it was a link. We'd have got on well, only the fate that threw us together parted us."

"Well," said Calla, struck by a new

thought, "as you knew the original Percy Godwyn, you can tell us—was *he* as like Felix as his portrait is?"

"Why, you see I didn't know Felix at that time. Percy was a big fellow masked in a great wild black beard."

"The description doesn't suggest any great resemblance," observed Miss Wroughton.

"When you have done libelling *this* gentleman, shall we move on and libel some other of the Godwyn ancestors?" said Felix.

"Libel? Oh, Mr. Grey, have we been saying anything so *very* ill-natured?" asked Mrs. Bertram, casting up a pair of languishing blue eyes.

Felix laughed his old boyish laugh of quiet amusement that Calla had known so well—once.

"I think Miss Yorke's comments were of a libellous nature," he remarked.

"Yes, if the greater the truth the greater

the libel," said Calla, with a gay smile and toss of her head.

Thus they pass by the portrait of Percy Godwyn laughing, chattering lightly. How often it must have happened in the old days of trap-doors and dungeons, oubliettes and secret panels, that light and innocent feet tripped unsuspiciously over the trap-door, and merry laughter echoed over the stone that closed the oubliette, unknowing of its ghastly depths, and unconscious young hands of children at play fell accidentally close to the spring of the secret panel.

Just so in the gallery of Godwyn Grange this day, as they stand smiling, careless, sauntering along in comfortable noon-day nonchalance, they are treading close to a secret spring of which none of them dream. They are so near to it; it seems at every step they must touch it and start to see its disclosure break upon them. So close to the surface lies the hidden thing of

whose existence they have no suspicion! It lies so shallowly, so slightly, yet so securely hidden! If one of them but only guessed at its existence, how soon the shallow covering could be cast aside, and the lost secret—lost, and yet lying unsuspected so close to those it most concerns—brought to the light of day. If but so much as a passing thought, a moment's suspicion, led them to the search, how instantly they would strike upon the grave where *that* lies buried whose resurrection should bring sorrow, and shame, and—— Could it bring joy in the train of these? Was ever the flower of a sinless, stainless happiness known to bloom on a grave such as this?

They pass on, unsuspecting; they leave the secret spring unpressed, the seal still on the tomb.

Neither on Felix nor on Lusada does the remotest idea of the hidden truth dawn. And as for Calla, she would as

soon suspect "murder most foul and most unnatural" in those she best loves, as dream of sin and shame being hidden where nevertheless they have long lain concealed—in the spot she would have pointed out as the very last in which to seek for them. So safe and silent and secure the secret lies; and it is written that the spring which guards it shall not be touched, however close upon it they tread in their blindness.

The next day some of the gentlemen of the party go out riding. Julius Lusada and Felix Grey, who in their early life had half lived on horseback, and would not have grumbled much if Circe had turned them into Centaurs, are of course of this party. It is unnecessary to observe that Lusada as a matter of course mounts the wildest and most vicious mare in the stables, and appears to enjoy those frolicsome endeavours to pitch him out of the saddle, which cause Calla, as she stands

watching the party out of sight, some alarm. She has not joined the riding-party, partly because no other ladies have voted for so doing, but firstly because her education in riding has been neglected. She has been on a donkey; has ridden a mule in Switzerland, and once mounted a quiet pony at Brighton—and that is the extent of her equestrian experience.

She watches Felix's grey steed and Lusada's chestnut out of sight regretfully, almost painfully, not so much on account of any uneasiness as to the safety of the chestnut's rider, for she holds in him, under any superficial anxiety, an absolute confidence and security, but because they will be out some hours—and this is Felix's last day at Godwyn, and friends though they are, friends though they must always be, she sees so little of him.

They are under one roof; they eat at the same table, lounge in the same draw-

ing-room, listen to the same songs, walk in the same garden. Yet it seems to her that they never draw a whit nearer to each other; they are as strangers, though they smile and say, "Good night, Felix," and "Good morning, Calla," still, as friends. What is it that keeps them so apart? It is no surveillance of Lusada's, no endeavour of hers. It must be, can be, only an almost imperceptible caution and avoidance of *his*. Not one word has she had alone with him; not for one moment have they two stood together without others whose presence, however silent and unobtrusive it was, yet came between them; not one allusion to old times has passed either of their lips; never once has she caught the old mutually-comprehending smile of familiar friendship and perfect sympathy, nor once has he pressed her hand

> "but as all others may,
> Or—so very little longer!"

So little longer, indeed, she almost

doubts whether he made any difference at all between her and all others.

This situation that she had once dreamt might have a certain sweetness in it—the old love mellowed into the moonlight of friendship, the new love rising to its zenith as her life's sun—was not sweet or satisfactory at all; the real position bore very little likeness to the ideal one.

Yet she could scarcely say she wished it was at an end, or was glad it was the last of the three days.

At five o'clock tea the riders have returned; but at the muster of that feminine gathering they do not all very punctually answer to the roll-call. Calla more than half suspects that refreshment of another kind is being served elsewhere. In the absence of Lusada and Felix, they are the topic of a good deal of remark.

"By Jove! to see those fellows ride!" Mr. Yorke observes, with such enthusiasm that he nearly oversets his cup of tea.

"We must have them down for the hunting," says Arnold Godwyn.

"One of them, at least, will open the eyes of the natives if you do," observes the other.

"He has done that already with those wild charges across country," interposes the host, laughing.

"Grey will do well enough," continues Mr. Yorke, "but I doubt if Lusada can ever be got to fall in with the laws of the field."

"These especial equestrians must cause you some anxiety as to your horses, Mr. Godwyn," observes Miss Wroughton.

"What do they do?" inquires Mrs. Bertram, vaguely and languidly, stirring her tea.

"I can tell you, by guess-work," replies Calla, laughingly. "They forget they are in a civilised land of hedges and fences, and they fling themselves at full speed.

"Over hill, over dale,
Through bush, through brier,
Over park, over pale,
and 'through flood' if not 'through fire!'"

"That is about it, Miss Yorke," says Mr. Godwyn, "and a treat it was to see them charge Bromley Common at a stretching gallop, racing neck and neck."

"Ah, that chestnut of yours—Wildfire—she's a real beauty," observes Tom Yorke, with an air of almost loving appreciation.

"She is," assents Arnold Godwyn; "she has a bit of a temper; but Lusada swears there's not a bit of vice about her."

Calla smiles to herself, having been informed, previous to this day's experience, on the best authority, that Wildfire is the most vicious brute in the stud, and only one groom dares ride her.

The equestrians, possibly through modesty after their feats, but more proba-

bly because they are enjoying a quiet and retired smoke, do not make their appearance; and Calla goes out into the garden to sit on the lawn seats under the elm-trees with the Bertrams and Miss Wroughton, and Robert Godwyn, who determinedly plants himself on a stump at her feet, and looks upward as at his queen.

A casual mention of a case in a daily paper guides the conversation so that it turns on the cheerful subject of lunatics and lunatic asylums. It is not a pleasant subject to Calla, of course; but a sort of fascination in the very unpleasantness of it makes her join in it with interest. As to the rest, they enjoy horrors as people not personally affected by them always do; and having skimmed lightly over the anecdotes of the man who believed himself a barley-corn, and the girl who thought she was a tea-pot, they plunge with much gusto into terrifying stories of murders

and midnight alarms, gibbering idiots and lunatic homicides.

"These would be suitable lullabies to listen to the last thing at night, wouldn't they?" suggests Miss Wroughton.

"I have been over six lunatic asylums," announces Robert confidentially to Calla.

"Six!—what a taste for horrors you must have!"

"I would not go over one for all the world," sighs Mrs. Bertram. "I only like to hear the romances of the lives immured there."

"I am not frightened of *anything*, as a rule," says Miss Wroughton, "but I *was* rather alarmed once when going over an asylum. A most horrible old man, looking rather galvanized than alive, thrust out a claw-like hand through a grating and clutched hold of my wrist. I was not alone, and of course I was quite safe *really;* but it was not pleasant, especially as he was one of the very worst cases—he

had murdered his own daughter, a girl of sixteen, of whom he was dotingly fond. I was a girl of sixteen myself at the time, and I shall never forget those wild eyes of his glaring at me through the bars, and his claw-like fingers on my arm."

"Odd how, whenever mad people murder anybody, it's always sure to be some child, or wife, or parent they're very fond of," remarks Robert Godwyn.

"It is always so. Wasn't there some niece, or cousin, or something of old Fitzgerald's who married a man who went mad and committed suicide?" observes Mr. Bertram.

"No, I don't think he committed suicide. Didn't he kill her? I forget exactly what it was, but I know there was some sad story. I don't know who told me—I heard something about it somewhere—but it was his grand-daughter, I think, not his niece," says Mrs. Bertram.

"Are you nervous, Miss Yorke?" de-

mands Miss Wroughton suddenly—"Because you are looking so very pale."

"I am not in the least nervous. But that was a ghastly picture you drew of the old man thrusting his hand through the bars. I was seeing it in my mind's eye."

"Here come Emily and Mr. Grey," announces Robert. "Emily has got some good horrible stories, I know," he continues with relish; "you ask her, and she'll tell you about the man who had seven sons——"

"Who all went mad?" guesses Miss Wroughton, interrupting him. "It begins more like a fairy-tale than a tragedy."

Calla rises up and leaves them to the enjoyment of their horrors, and crosses the lawn hurriedly to meet Emily Godwyn and Felix Grey, not caring in the least whether her action is conspicuous or not, only determined that he shall not be drawn into a conversation to him so painful.

"Well, Felix, and how did you enjoy your ride? and why did you desert us at

tea-time?" she begins, plunging into conversation with unusual animation and freedom; and then, turning to Miss Godwyn, in a manner takes possession of the two, and lingering on the lawn, keeps them lingering there with her. The group under the elm-trees apparently can dispense with Miss Godwyn's story of the seven sons at which Robert so temptingly hinted, or more probably Robert himself is endeavouring to narrate it, for he is evidently holding forth much to his own satisfaction.

Calla wishes that their hostess would pass on to that group, and leave Felix here with her. Here and now would be the opportunity she so longs for, of a little pleasant friendly confidential talk, that would bridge over the gulf which she feels with perplexity and pain to be daily widening. But Emily Godwyn does not leave them. More annoying still, Felix does not seem to wish that she should—he will not in any

way direct his especial attention to Calla; he gives to Miss Godwyn the lead in the light chit-chat, and keeps himself in the background. So the minutes slip away, until Yorke and Lusada come out from the house and join them, and *that* chance is gone.

"Why could not Miss Godwyn have walked on?—she *might* have reflected that two old friends would like a few minutes' quiet chat," thinks Calla, impatiently and unjustly. "And now this is his last day, and I shall *never* have a chance of a quiet talk with him."

She is glad she stood between Felix and that group under the elm-trees, who, all unconsciously, were touching on the tragedy the shadow of which has marred his life, and spoiled the fairest season of her youth. She knows what "Fitzgerald" family it must have been that they were vaguely alluding to and wondering about, and rejoices that in their indifference and

forgetfulness they came no nearer to the mark. Apart from her anxiety to shield him, now and ever, from any allusion that should draw down darker the ever-present shadow that must brood over him, those chance words spoken have set her thinking on the old question, the old sorrow, again.

"What is done cannot be undone." They are parted; they have left their brief sweet dream of love behind; the past is a past beyond recall; and before them lie their separate paths, diverging wide. It is well, surely. Even when the sense of that separation comes home to her with the bitterest regret, when she feels the aching consciousness of a vacancy and a void in her once completed life, the loss of *something* gone beyond recall, whose place no new joy can ever fill—she cannot say that it is otherwise than well.

It was duty only that divided them, no lack of love. It was *his* will; he deemed

that duty called; he answered to the summons for himself and for her. She had followed under his standard; carried out his will. She cannot question now that he was right. Yet she cannot realise the truth of the curse that separates them. It is well proven; but somehow it seems an impossible and distant dream to her. Those horrible stories of mania and murder! what could Felix ever have to do with them, in even the wildest possibilities of the future? How can they be connected even by the most distant links of association with such as *he?* What if his father, what if his brother, fell under the family curse? Still and ever *he* seems to her to stand apart from it and them.

Those calm, dreamy, deep-brown eyes of his, his mother's beautiful eyes!—what could they ever know of the furtive ferocity, the wavering, cunning gleam, even the mere vacant unrest, of madness? Thinking on this subject now that Felix is

so near to her again, Calla feels no alarm, no relief as to the "might-have-beens" of the possible life from which they two have turned away—only a sense of utter unreality and impossibility in the danger. It seems a shadow that separated them, no substance.

Still never for a moment does she dream that the past will have power to cloud her future. Its ghost haunts her present just now, naturally, for a time. But that fair past is safely dead and buried. She has put up its tombstone and written its epitaph herself. The harmless ghost may walk yet for a day or a week. But time will lay it. It will fade in the light of the dawning day—the day that dawns so fair. A bright cloudless noon is before her. Love has not fled from her for ever in the closing of one dark night; his light is filling all her sky again. Youth, hope, love, beauty, guard her around. All is well.

Felix, too, is reiterating to himself hour

by hour that it is well. They woke from their sweet dream in time; she has recovered from the pain of the waking—forgotten it, perhaps. It has only shadowed her young life, as he had trusted, "for the clouds and showers of an April day." She will be happy and proud, safe shielded and sheltered, in Julius Lusada's love.

That Lusada loves her truly and fondly, Felix can have no doubt. He sees them together daily, sees the mutual smile of perfect sympathy, the magnetic consciousness when she is looking at him which draws him to turn and meet that look—the reflected light of the same thought flash from eyes to eyes. He hears the unconsciously tenderer tone in Lusada's voice when he speaks to her—he watches with that silent penetration that sees unseen, and observes unsuspected and retired, this lion lying tamed and purring at a girl's feet, satisfied in the full consciousness of his unmastered strength to rest and bask awhile.

Yes, it is well for her, Felix thinks; well for Lusada too. And for himself? Well, let come what may, there is work enough waiting to be done; there is plenty of room in the world for the expenditure of all energies; there is more in life than love.

Their last evening at Godwyn Grange passes quietly, as the rest have done. Some people resort to the innocent diversion of draughts and dominoes; some contribute to the general entertainment by setting and keeping the ball of conversation rolling; Mrs. Bertram sings two doleful ballads of her own composition, after which—possibly in anticipation of a third—some of the gentlemen slip away stealthily to the smoking-room.

The next morning Felix returns to London. This is Calla's last thought at night, her first in waking, though she tries to believe that she is quite indifferent to the fact.

She is unusually gay and lively at break-

fast, and seems brimming over with exuberant vitality, and mirth, and laughter. Miss Godwyn notices this; and Calla would be amused if she could know how curiously wrong an interpretation her hostess puts on her lively manner at the time of Felix Grey's departure. Emily Godwyn is keen enough of perception to have suspected some repressed and unacknowledged interest, crushed down and carefully kept in the background, between Felix and Calla, but her ideas have gone off altogether on the wrong track. She has seen in her day cruel, albeit unintentionally cruel, games played by girls in the full flush of youth and beauty and triumph, who never heeded the mischief they were doing any more than a child chasing a butterfly. She likes Calla; but, misled by her brightness and high spirits, she fancies her to be, from simple coquetry and caprice—in all innocence and thoughtlessness, while perfectly loyal to her troth—playing such a game,

where she stakes nothing, and her lover's friend unwittingly hazards all his peace. Calla indeed has been a better actress than any who knew her could ever have dreamt she would prove, since the only woman who observes something in the background gives it quite a wrong shape and colouring.

It is nearly time for Felix to start to catch his train. He and Lusada are passing from the billiard-room along the picture-gallery; Calla is coming in the opposite direction from her own apartment; and so, among the pictures in the morning light, the three meet.

"Are you bidding a brotherly adieu to your own likeness?" she says lightly, looking from Felix to the wall where hang the portraits of the Puritan martyr who died accursed by his house, and of Percy Godwyn, self-exiled from it.

"I said my good nights last night, as I came along here after midnight," he responded, "and half wondered whether

these old ghosts don't come down out of their frames, and hold strange revels here in the dead of night. You have no idea what an eerie place this is in the small hours, lit up by one lamp."

"The house *is* haunted, they say," observes Lusada quite gravely, "but only when there's danger and death to any of the family. I told you, Calla, didn't I? how the sign of evil here is a strange light flashing about in places where no mortal light can be?"

"Yes, you told us that on our last night at La Basse-Rive, and how it was last seen when Percy Godwyn was lost at sea."

"And that is only two years or so ago. It is not only an old legend, you see—the superstition holds its own in modern days."

"It is strange," says Felix, meditatively.

They are touching the very spring of that shallowly-hidden secret again. Is the spring rusted, that even now, when these

three in their unconsciousness lay hand upon it, it does not move?

"Are you going back to La Basse-Rive?" inquires Calla of Felix, the allusion having brought the place to her mind.

"No, I think not yet. I shall most likely stay a little while in London."

"You will look us up, then, of course? You know the hours we are likely to be at home, and we shall not leave London for some weeks yet, I suppose," she observes, in a light and ordinary tone, as she stands by Lusada's side—and in a half unconscious anxiety to assure herself that she is right and safe, within the strict boundaries of friendship, and only fulfilling the duties of friendly courtesy, she glances up at him.

He smiles down on her with his grave gentle smile; his steel-bright falcon eyes soften with the rare tenderness in which a strong man regards the woman whom he loves, the soft vine twining round his life, who beside his strength seems fair and

fragile and helpless as a child. With one of those passing and half involuntary demonstrations, that look so little and mean so much, he rings the end of the ribbon that binds her hair round his finger, and smoothes it back into the place from which it had strayed, and his hand lingers on the soft dark locks.

Felix, by sheer force of will, compels a smile to his lips as he replies to her by half-a-dozen words of casual commonplace.

"We are friends, and she is happy. I should be content," he says to himself, while the fangs of a forbidden love, whose once-upon-a-time sweetness seems turned to fire—of a jealousy that he scorns as a sin and a shame, drive deep into his heart, "sharper than a serpent's tooth."

The dog-cart that is to bear departing guests to the station is at the door; the hall-bell clangs out its summons. Ten minutes later, Felix Grey is gone, his last

glance back into the great hall of Godwyn showing him Lusada and Calla standing in the coloured shadows of the stained glass windows together; the bars of many-tinted light striking across her white morning-dress; one golden gleam glorifying her head like an aureole, and by some heavenly alchemy transmuting the shadowy coils of her dark hair to sunshine as the motes dazzle and dance upon it. Why need she look so much lovelier than ever now, as if to blind his eyes with the mere memory of the sun that has set for him?

He is gone; and the chance of a random touch baring to the light the hidden truth that is lying lost so near, is gone with him.

CHAPTER IV.

"ONCE DRINKING DEEP OF THAT DIVINEST ANGUISH!"

FROM the day when the news burst upon Europe that France had set the torch to the pile laid ready for kindling, and that the history of the Summer of 1870 would be memorable in the red-lettered annals of war, we all remember how swift and steady was the march of events, with how sure a stride they moved inexorably to the end that no horoscope had forecast, —the end unseen by all, and most of all unseen by him whose hand, like Frankenstein's, set free the Fate that was to follow him to his fall. So rapidly that bystanders stood breathless, the armies of France and

Germany drew to the battle-ground, whilst wild rumours and contradictory reports flashed along the telegraph wires from centre to centre, and Europe watched and waited for the first shot to sound the signal round the world that the game of death was begun.

Calla watched all the proceedings with deep interest; all her sympathies lay naturally with the land she loved, where she had spent so many happy seasons. Fortunately for the peace of the lovers, Julius Lusada's sympathies inclined in the same direction, although as a rule Calla did not find his political views readily conformable to her own, and had spent a good deal of time in inducing him to comprehend that a monarchy need not of necessity be a despotism. She found fiction pale in the light of living history, discarded the perusal of novels in favour of daily study of the newspapers, and re-read with new enthusi-

asm Macaulay's "Lays," and Dobell's "England in Time of War."

Public interests, however, never ran any chance of eclipsing private ones with her; and no matter how exciting was the news at which the head-lines of the daily papers hinted, she never forgot at the usual hours to watch for Felix's coming, to wonder, as days passed, why he did not come.

When after a little time he did call to pay his promised visit, it happened—by a chance which for the moment both he and Calla felt to be rather embarrassing—to occur at an hour when Lusada was there with her alone, Mr. Yorke and Mrs. King both being out, and having left the plighted pair to a pleasant *tête-à-tête*, which they were, at the time when Felix entered, employing in the mutual perusal of Sydney Dobell's unrivalled war-lyric, the "Evening Dream" of Inkermann.

In real life, however, such embarrass-

ments as these melt away like morning mists, unless a morbidly sensitive imagination exaggerates them into casting a serious shadow over an occasion that might otherwise pass unclouded by any oppressive consciousness. We waste a good deal of fretting over pebbles in our way, that we might tread down without noticing them.

Only for a moment Felix half wishes that his visit had chanced at another time; only for a moment a faint flush crimsons Calla's cheek as she smiles a quiet welcome and pushes away the volume which was rapidly fanning her patriotism to white heat, and forgets suddenly that Inkermann was ever fought, and loses utterly in her own personal feeling all sense of the great world outside.

Lusada holds out a cordial hand to Felix, and there is no shade of reserve or restraint in his glad and genial tones, and the fraternal greeting with which—as the visitor manifests some involuntary mo-

mentary hesitation—he fairly pulls Felix forward into the room.

They begin of course immediately, as everyone all over London is beginning to-day, "Well, what do you think of this morning's news?" They plunge down deep into war politics, keeping, however, just near enough to the surface not to dive beyond Calla's powers of following them. This is no great hardship, for even though her knowledge of these subjects may not quite keep pace with her interest in them, she is one of the girls to whom a man can talk, in the full confidence of a ready comprehension, a bright, alert intelligence, rather receptive than perceptive, following every word.

In the course of a little while, Lusada rises and takes up a brigandish-looking hat—one of the relics of his days of non-civilization—and looks about for his gloves.

"You are not going?" says Calla, with becoming surprise in her tone, and a flut-

ter of something that is half relief, and half a sudden agitation she could not explain, at her heart.

"Not going, old man?" says Felix, starting up too, as if Lusada's movement gave the signal for his own departure.

"Must be off now," responds his friend cheerily; "I shall see you soon again, Calla. Sit down, old fellow," and he flings his arm round Felix's shoulder with the old familiar affection and comradeship, and pushes him back to his chair. "I daresay you two old friends have plenty to say to each other."

"But must you go?" asks Calla, as a mere form of words, for she knows well now that he will not stay.

"Good-bye," is his only answer, as he takes her hand—"good-bye, dear boy," as he turns to Felix.

So he leaves them together; they two are alone for the first time since their parting at La Basse-Rive. At Godwyn Grange

they had never a word alone, and Lusada noticed and knows this, although it was no work nor will of his that kept them so apart. However well or ill he reads Calla's heart, he feels, perhaps, that it is her unuttered, unacknowledged, even unconscious will that he is obeying now—or more probably he acts in obedience to an instinct of his own that he himself could not explain.

He leaves them, and Felix's eyes follow him to the door with a flash of enthusiasm and perfect comprehension. That look is one of those rare ones that for a moment light up almost startlingly his calm, thoughtful face, and says now more plainly than words can speak,

"Noble, generous fellow! Yes, you *may* trust me."

While he is looking after Lusada, Calla's eyes are fixed on him, questioningly, observantly for a moment, and then, like a reflected light, that expression on his face

passes to hers, and the same glow shines on both.

For some moments they are both quite silent, and yet in the silence there is no embarrassment. Then Calla looks down, and picks up a strip of embroidery she had tossed aside an hour ago, and holds it idly and absently, her needle vaguely wandering about in search of the last stitch; it looks more at home and at ease to profess to be occupied, however lightly, in some light work. It is Felix who breaks the silence with some common-place remark, and after her answer there comes another pause, only a brief one this time.

"And you are happy, Calla?" he says, with the old grave, kind smile, in a tone that requires an answer, and yet is more of assertion than interrogation.

"Yes, I ought to be," she replies clearly, with a responsive smile, and some touch of the old confidence and affection softening her look and tone. Then it occurs to

her that her answer in that form of phrase is scarcely positive enough, and she adds, gently and deliberately, "And I *am*."

"That is well," he says sincerely. "I am glad to see your way of life lies so fair and open before you. I did not over-praise my friend, did I?"

"You did not indeed. He is all that you said, and more."

"I thought you would find it so. You are not going to be married just yet, I understand?"

"Oh! no. Papa," she replies, as if the mere mention of papa's name were quite sufficient reason and explanation.

"Yes; he has not had much of his little daughter lately, and doesn't wish to lose her too soon," Felix observes comprehendingly.

"That is it. So there is no talk of—anything—just at present." Calla's air of calmness in alluding to her marriage is just a shade less successful than Felix's,

but still it is a very fair performance. "Papa wants to do Scotland and the Highlands and the English lakes this Summer."

"Won't you and Yorke be coming over to the Château again, then?"

"No; why, I have only just this season left it, you know, after a visitation of—I'm ashamed to count how many months. But I do wish Isabel could come to London."

"How is she, poor child?" he asks tenderly.

"Oh! she is quite well; but so dull, liable to such despondent moods. It is rather a lonely, monotonous life for her, you know."

"Yes; an unsatisfactory life—too much time for brooding, too little occupation. I am going over there shortly; I must try to induce my mother to let me take Bell for a tour."

"I *wish* you would!" Calla rejoins eagerly; "but I don't think dear Mrs. Darrell will ever let Bell stir away from her."

"True," he agrees gravely. "I fear she will not."

"What are your plans for this year?" inquires Calla.

This question sets Felix talking upon his plans, which appear rather unformed and shapeless just at present, as indeed most plans of travels in this disturbed season are. He is arranging for the publication of a volume of sketches of Italy and the East; and as soon as that is settled he will be off for a brief visit to La Basse-Rive, and then off again somewhere else, but whether to Norway and Sweden, to Paris or to Berlin, he seems uncertain. Much must of course depend on the state of affairs on the Continent. It appears at present probable that there may be a general exodus of English families from France, in which case he shall suggest to his mother the prudence of following the general example; but none can guess yet how the season will turn out; there may be no disturbances sufficiently

serious to compel them to move; and, for himself, the excited state of the country will only render his coming trip a more interesting one.

He inquires how she is getting on with her writing, offers a gentle criticism on a short story of hers which has lately appeared, just in the old privileged brotherly way; and goes on to tell her about his travels during the past year or two, his forthcoming volume of "Pen-pictures" thereof, and so branches off from his own book, and travels to other people's books and travels, which are very much less interesting to her.

They sit chatting easily and pleasantly enough; the surface is all calm and smiles; yet in this hour that she had desired there is far more pain than pleasure to her now. She had wished—her only wish—to see him as a friend, again alone, as in the old days, *really* her friend, and not, as at Godwyn Grange, an acquaintance who smiled

"good morning" and "good night," and in all save common-place public chit-chat was shut apart from her. Now he is here with her alone, her friend and brother once more; but the fruit of her fulfilled desire seems all to have turned to bitter ashes; the very calmness of their conversation frets her heart with an impatient pain. She longs for some mention of the past, some assurance that it is not only with *her* that all is well. Friends may allude to any past in all safety and freedom; and they are surely friends. Without some allusion to the past that lies so safely dead and buried, she cannot rest content.

We visit the tombs of our dead. Why then fear to look back on the graves of our hopes,

"Wi' the green grass growing over them"?

An irresistible impulse possesses her, drawing her to lift the veil from off the face of one silent memory, and see whether

it is sleeping or waking, living or dead, in his heart.

"I am afraid Isabel is very lonely," she says at last suddenly, with an abrupt reversion from the topic of the day, on which they had just been speaking, back to their words at the early part of the interview. His sister is the nearest and easiest approach to the subject of himself. "I wish she were here, I wish I could give her part of my pleasures here. She would enjoy them. It seems unfair that I should have all the—" she hesitates for a word, he supplies it.

"All the happiness. Enjoy it and be thankful," he says gently. "You are fitted by nature for happiness, Calla; you will be happy."

"Are *you* happy, Felix?" she asks with sudden earnestness, fixing her large dark eyes, full of intent inquiry, on his face. He answers rather slowly, with the steadfast look and tone of perfect truth.

"Sometimes I am happy. I have sufficient work to do to occupy me and to keep me from brooding. There are different kinds of happiness in the world. Some forms of happiness are not beyond my reach. For those that are forbidden to me, I have ceased to long."

Her eyes sink slowly from their intent gaze upon him, and after a moment's silence she says softly,

"And we, you and I, shall always be good friends?"

"Always, dear, always," he replies gravely.

"Be happy," she says, entreatingly, and more agitatedly than before, after another pause. "You *will* be happy, Felix? For how can I ever be happy if you are not?"

"Our ways are not likely to lead much together," he answers calmly and gently. "And when you think of me, Calla, think of me as being happy—always as happy."

If Felix were left to his own judgment and his own choice, the interview, as far as all personal allusions and memories are concerned, would end here. He sees that in her heart the ashes of the past are glowing again into living fire. He knows that in his own heart that fire burns with a fiercer flame than ever. "Many waters cannot quench love;" the waves of time, of absence, of hopeless severance, assail it in vain. He knows this now, and by his knowledge he would take warning and avoid running the risk he sees so near. But can ever a woman let a man keep within the limits of his own endurance he has marked to himself? Is she ever content until she has set a lighted match within half an inch of the gunpowder train? One here and there may refrain from actually setting the match, but she longs to set it all the same. Calla is no exception to the general rule of her sex under circumstances such as these.

It is true that all she says is "Felix! Felix!" But the tone of her voice, the quiver of her lip, the look of her eyes, so full of love and yearning and passion and pain, is enough to light the match that lies ready to kindle into flame at even less than these. Still Felix tramples on the rising fire, grasps the temptation, and thrusts it from him like a living, struggling foe.

"Calla, child," he says, with desperately compelled calmness, "have you not learnt yet that the forces of good and evil are balanced in us all? Let the evil sleep. Now when the devil tempts me to galvanize the dead—to no avail and with no hope—do not you help it. You and I are parted, Calla. Remember that; remember all that parts us two, and do not tempt me to presume on what influence I may still hold, to no possible good, and to no end but pain."

She has no word to say in answer, nor, if she wished to speak, could she trust her

voice to utterance. Her beautiful eyes dim slowly with unshed tears; they never turn from his face, and a sort of half-reproachful, half-penitent distress in them, a patient helpless sorrow like a child's, pierces straight to his heart. He is afraid he has been unkind.

"Calla, you think me cold, you think me harsh and stern. Perhaps it is best you should think so. But yet for once—for one last time—your eyes force me to own the truth. As I loved you always, as I loved you on that sunshiny morning on the sands at La Basse-Rive, so I love you now, Calla, and shall love you to the day I die. But for all the world I would not have you sacrifice your beautiful young life to the memory of—of the hopes we had, the dream we dreamt once."

Calla's breast heaves as her heart beats fast and deep. Still she feels unable to speak; only her lovely, passionate, plaintive

eyes flash now with pride and joy—she is conscious of nothing in the world but that he loves her still, and the tears that had dimmed the long black lashes seem to dry and vanish in this sudden light.

His hands clench themselves tight; his breath comes short; and he is pale as a man engaged in mortal struggle. He is silent so for a moment or two, then he draws nearer to her; he takes her hand in his; his arm is round her again. Looking up from her as if addressing some presence unseen, he says,

"Lusada, true friend, forgive me. This is my one disloyalty to you."

As he speaks, he has drawn Calla closer to his side. She makes no effort to release herself from his arm; she looks up in his face, thinking nothing of past or future, knowing only that they two are together again, remembering nothing of all that should sever them still.

"I thought you had forgotten, Felix!" she whispers, almost unconsciously.

"Forgotten!" he echoes. "Child, did you ever know, did you ever *dream*, how I loved you?" He can say no more—it seems to him in that moment as if he had scarcely known himself the force of that love till now. He has no other word to utter, only as she looks up his lips meet hers, as in the long past happy days.

For once in his life Felix Grey loses his steadfast self-control; for once—the first and the last time—he is tried too far, and breaks down under the trial. He strains her to his heart as if she were again his own; he kisses her with all the mingled passion of meeting and of parting, of love and of despair. It is but a few moments in reality. It seems to them both brief as a lightning flash, yet long enough to comprise a lifetime of joy and pain.

Felix lets her free suddenly, unclasps his arms with an abruptness that almost

pushes her away from him; and while she stands breathless and silent, as one in a dream, he flings himself into a chair, and buries his face in his hands.

The moment's irresistible impulse is past; and a hot glow of shame conflicts with and conquers the flush of passion. He has been weak; he has been disloyal; and till this day weakness and disloyalty have been unknown to him. The temptation was great; but the shame of yielding to it seems surely greater to Felix Grey.

Calla sees that his whole frame is shaken by some overcoming agitation; and as with gentle force she tries to pull his hand away from his face, she sees that tears are blinding his eyes—the first tears that she has ever known him shed.

This day she has been till now as a very child in her softness and weakness. Now she is suddenly strong. She is a woman, thinking no more of herself or of her own

feelings. The instinct that lies dormant in every woman's nature, the maternal impulse of soothing, calming, caring for, has awoke; self is forgotten, and weakness trampled down.

"Forgive me, Felix," she whispers gently, but quite calmly and steadily now.

"Forgive *you*, child, *you?*" he mutters, in a half stifled voice; "but I! a man—I who should be strong for both!"

"I can be strong for myself now," she answers, "do not fear for me."

She rests her hand softly, firmly, not trembling nor appealing, but encouraging, on his, and does not move it until she sees that the emotion is over and he is himself again.

"It will be best, you see, that you and I should not meet, Calla. It is well that I am going away. Fate has ordered it wisely. I think there is no more to be said between us. It is not well, you see, to dig up the dead."

"Because it is not dead! Were it dead and cold, we might dig back into the past safely enough," she responds, resolutely. "But you are right, Felix. Between us there is nothing more that need be said. All that we might say—all that I may long to say—and oh! how much we might say!"—she hesitates, and cannot wholly repress a sigh—"is not needed—is treading on dangerous ground. So let us put on the coffin-lid, and heap up the earth over the past. Never mind if we bury it alive."

This girl speaking now—with the proudly erect head, and the half-mocking, defiant ring in her resolute voice—is not the trembling, tearful, yielding, yearning Calla of only a few minutes before. But that softness was dangerous; and with this firmness Felix is safe, and in full possession of himself.

"Bury it, alive or dead," he answers, as firmly as she. "And we turn our backs

upon it, and leave it in its grave; and the separate ways that lie before us, let us walk them bravely, hopefully, Calla."

"We will!" she utters solemnly, looking up as if taking a vow to heaven.

"Other duties and hopes call *you*, Calla; other ties will grow around you; there is work in the world that calls *me*. We live our lives apart henceforth. And on the day when all the dead have resurrection," he adds, with the dreamy, far-away look she knows so well, "let our love rise pure and stainless, in a world where mortal weakness and passion shall not be."

They stand in silence for a while, without touching a hand or uttering a word. They are both rapt as if in a dream, only to them this solid earth seems a dream. For the moment they have left it far behind.

Presently their hands meet in a parting clasp; they say in hushed accents, "Good-

bye!"—no other word, though they know that they are taking now a true and a supreme farewell.

BOOK II.

THE LAST BATTLE.

"Whether we shall meet again I know not,
Therefore our everlasting farewell take;
For ever and for ever farewell, Cassius!
If we do meet again, why, we shall smile;
If not, why then this parting was well made."

Julius Cæsar.

CHAPTER V.

"A SKELETON DOWN BY A HEARTHSTONE."

WHEN Julius Lusada came again to Calla—and he was never long absent from her side—he asked no question, dropped not even a hint of any inquiry as to her conversation with Felix. He found no sadness, nor coolness, nor new reserve —nay, found even a tenderer softness in her manner. His silence on the subject, that she knew well could not be indifferent to him, sometimes puzzled a little, but never displeased her, and perhaps made her cling to him with a deeper and fuller affection—half self-reproachful and half-grateful—than ever before.

Yet she did not quite understand him, then or ever. She could not fathom and follow the seeming inconsistencies of this nature, so impetuous, and dominant, and self-confident; unruly and indomitable even in the wildest of its resolves; yet so gentle, and trustful, and generous—so startlingly frank sometimes, and yet withal of so delicate a reserve. She never could thoroughly comprehend him; he was always taking her by surprise. Although quick sympathies made her generally comprehending and adaptive, her forte was not analysis of character; and keener eyes than hers had failed ere now to read Julius Lusada altogether aright, perhaps chiefly because they insisted on viewing the nature as a much more complex and intricate one than it truly was. It was drawn on simple lines enough in reality.

"Do you know that I don't understand you yet?" Calla said to him once, smiling, but with a softly searching look into the

face whose failing was certainly not a lack of frankness.

"Don't you, little one? Nor I you. But I guess a man never does thoroughly understand a woman. And maybe I would love you less if your little heart were less a mystery to me," he added, in his quiet candid way, with a mingling of tenderness, and a sort of half-careless contentment to take things as they came.

"That's an encouragement to let it remain a mystery," she said lightly, with a brief glance up from under her long dark lashes—one of those quick up-glances that always carry such a charm.

"Yes," he said, "let it, if you will. I know it's noble, and I know it's true."

It was only a very few days after Calla's parting interview with Felix that the news came to her that he had gone off as "special correspondent" to the scene of war. He started so suddenly that he took no farewells of his friends, with the excep-

tion of Lusada, whom he visited on his way to the station. He wrote to Calla a brief note explaining his plans, so far as the plans of a roving correspondent were susceptible of explanation, wishing her good-bye, and bidding her be happy.

Sometimes she fancied—and Felix only could have told whether she fancied rightly or not—that his motive in this sudden movement was to assure himself that the parting between himself and her was a parting indeed, to avert from her path every little cloud of doubts or regrets that his presence in the same city might have caused, and leave her life tranquil and at peace. At other times she thought that the step needed no such motive to account for it. Felix's inclination for travelling and search for some fresh literary work naturally combined to render such an appointment eminently suitable for him.

The Summer so fruitful of events for history to garner up passed quietly, peace-

fully, pleasantly to Calla. No new joys brightened, no new sorrows shadowed her life. The delight of knowing that she out of all the world of women was Lusada's choice, the pride of being his idol, the sway that he in his love and his strength held over her, did not diminish. The old memories slept peacefully enough; but they lived and breathed, and stirred softly, as one stirs in a dream sometimes. This is not the story of the war, but of one girl's early womanhood, which this Summer was passing peacefully. While the succession of disastrous defeats dragged France down from her glory—when the "fiery circle closed" round Sedan—when the Republic was proclaimed, and the undefended Empire crumbled into ruins in a day, Julius Lusada and Mr. Yorke, with Calla of course, were travelling about the British Isles, doing Ireland from Dublin to Killarney, and Scotland from Edinburgh to Aberdeen.

It is possible that it was only Calla's influence and the all-potent spell of attraction she exercised over him, which kept Lusada contented with this quiet, unadventurous tour in peaceful and domestic lands, and prevented him from joining some one or another of the guerilla bands who took part in the great struggle.

To his temperament a long lull from action was at first wearisome, and then, as he waxed impatient under it, unendurable; he must be always marching and moving; repose palled upon him; he would but halt for a brief breathing-space, and then on again; excitement and exertion were the very elements from which he drew his life; and wasted energies would simply have preyed upon and eaten away that strength which lived upon its own exercise.

It is very doubtful whether even his love for Calla could have kept him absolutely stationary for many months; he would have wearied of any one spot. But Calla

and her father were moving now from place to place, and he gladly moved too, contented himself with quiet days of easy travelling and comfortable hotels, and seldom sighed to camp out in the open air. He was really getting civilised, Calla informed him, with considerable satisfaction.

It is a mild, early Autumn day in Paris, fair and clear, as if Paris were her smiling self instead of the deserted and distracted city hemmed in by the iron ring of relentless foes, and with a yet more fatal foe crouched lurking in the core of her own heart.

Heaps of dust and dirt accumulate unheeded along the once spotless roads; the city is too busy arming now to care for its old beauty. Even now the spiked helmets gleam actually within sight of Paris; the hated Uhlans are drawing nearer—nearer. The streets are almost deserted, save where a squad of young recruits, a battalion of the veteran National Guard, file by; ruin

is written in the dismantled, desolate shops, the closed shutters of every other house; the few women who are out are in mourning.

"Who that knew her only in her beauty and her glory could recognise Paris now?" observes Felix Grey, as he stands on the threshold of the house where he has an apartment, in conversation with the *concierge* and a friend of the *concierge*, a slim young workman in a blue blouse, with a handsome melancholy face and straight black hair, who is not wholly unknown to Felix, whom the Darrells had seen at La Basse-Rive in the days of peace and plenty —Louis Raquet, indeed, who married the pretty "Maid of the Mill." For here in Paris, with some surprise, Felix has fallen by a chance encounter across all the family from the mill, who on Angélique's marriage had moved to Paris, unhappily for them, in time to be involved in the general ruin.

"And one man's work—all one man's

work!" observes Louis bitterly, with a dark look in his soft melancholy Celtic eyes. "He will be called to render his account."

"He is fallen," rejoins Felix quietly.

Night and day the strains of the "Marseillaise" echo through the streets of Paris. They burst forth now, as a band of young fellows of the Garde Mobile, in uniforms as yet unstained come marching down the street. How the notes of that most magnificent of war-songs clash like the ring of crossing steel! What marvel if men fought well to that wild, fierce chorus, which sets the blood leaping, and should strike fire even from a coward's veins!

Night and day Felix has heard it sung of late; yet, well as he knows the turn of every note, it stirs him with a certain thrill of exultation always.

"There they go," remarks Louis, following the band of young soldiers with his eyes sadly. "They sing loud and clear, don't they? And how long will it be

before that handsome boy there, or that tall one with the blond hair, lies staring up at the sky, with a bullet of the accursed Prussian in his heart?"

"If life would buy the freedom and peace of this unhappy city, who would grudge it?" responds Felix.

"None!—but we pay our price in vain," says Louis. "You have well resolved, then, to stay here in Paris, Monsieur?" he adds.

"Yes, I stay."

"Monsieur had best think well. To-morrow it will be too late to change resolutions. There will be no chance of getting outside the walls of Paris by to-morrow."

"I know. All the world is flying by the last train to-day; but whoever leaves Paris now will not be able to re-enter it, and I want to see with my own eyes all that is to pass here."

"Un télégram," says a commissionaire,

approaching the *concierge*, "c'a été long-temps en route. Un télégram pour Monsieur"—spelling out the word on the envelope—"G-r-Grey."

"For me?" says Felix, putting out his hand quickly. He expects no telegram, and knows it can be no good news. He tears the thin crackling paper open, and reads—

"*From George Darrell to Felix Grey.*

"'*Come to us at once. Your mother is dangerously ill.*'"

"I must leave Paris immediately," he says. "Thank God the last train has not gone!"

"There will be no room," suggests the *concierge*. "Monsieur knows the excitement, the rush. Every place will be taken."

"Whether the places be taken or not, there shall be room for me!"

And there is room for him. Through

the crowd and the crush that bubbles in a perpetual uproar at the station, men, women, and children struggling their way to the train as if for dear life—and for very life it is indeed that some are flying—Felix forces his way, and he is one of those who that day succeed in beating the retreat from Paris.

The journey to La Basse-Rive seems endless to him. Trains are so slow, travelling so difficult; obstacles foreseen and unforeseen of the contingencies of warfare bar the path; so that it is the next day before he reaches the Château de la Basse-Rive.

Isabel is watching for her brother; he sees her standing on the threshold as the carriage wheels round the courtyard and draws up at the hall-door.

"Well?" he questions, grasping both her hands. He dares scarcely ask more until her composed, though sad look, reassures him. "How is she?"

"Very ill. We have been waiting for you so anxiously. We began to fear you could not come."

"The telegram was delayed, and all travelling is difficult now. I received the message only barely in time to get away from Paris on the last day that egress was possible. Now I am here tell me, Isabel, quickly! how long has she been ill?—what doctor have you?"

"Dr. La Motte. Mamma has not been really well for some time, though she made nothing of it. When she got worse, we did not at first think it was serious, and Dr. La Motte gave us no cause for alarm at his first visit. Directly he told us there was danger, we sent for you."

"And is there much danger?" he asks, after a pause.

"Yes," Isabel answers quietly. "We should not have sent for you so urgently if there had not been reason to anticipate the worst; and mamma has asked for you

so often—all night and day she has been wondering how soon you could be here."

Felix does not answer—perhaps he cannot; only in his heart he thanks God the message reached him in time.

"The doctor is with her now," continues his sister. "Directly he comes down, I will take you to her. Listen, I think that is his foot now on the stairs."

Together they turn hastily to the door to waylay the doctor, and seek to read the verdict on his face even before he speaks. That he has no good news for them they see at once. He has learnt to know that all the family at the Château de la Basse-Rive belong to the order of those who can bear to hear, and to whom he may venture to tell, the truth. And gravely and kindly he lets them know the plain truth now.

From the invalid herself that truth cannot be concealed. In the intervals of wearying pain, of the semi-unconscious

apathy produced by sedatives, she presses those who watch by her with the one question, whose sad answer fills their hearts; her eyes search theirs with a scrutiny that seems to read the tenor of their thoughts as plainly as print. They cannot deceive her, even if they would. She knows that she is doomed, and the knowledge gives her no added pain.

It seems half a relief, and yet half a distress, to her to see Felix. Again and again she has asked for him; now that he is here, she clings to him with an unusual betrayal of affection, and yet his presence appears to have on her a painfully agitating effect.

All that day they watch her in that dreary anxiety that dares not lift itself for a moment into hope. To Mr. Darrell it is a comfort to have Felix there. The old man seems almost numbed and dazed by his sorrow; he can scarcely realize that he is to lose the wife who has been to him for

many years so dear and true and tender a helpmate. Whether she has fully loved him or not, she has been all to him, and half his life will go with her. He leans on his step-son's quiet strength with a sort of relief and reliance. On Isabel, too, in these hours of trouble he looks as if she had been truly his daughter.

"God knows what we should have done without this dear child," he says to Felix, holding Isabel's hand. "She is so indefatigable a nurse—so brave and strong a spirit."

That evening Claudine is watching by Mrs. Darrell; Felix and Isabel are downstairs, wondering when the doctor will come; he is expected every minute.

"You look so tired and worn-out, Bell," Felix says. "Now, while Claudine is with my mother, go to your room and rest. You must get a little sleep now, if you are to sit up to-night again. Go, like a good

girl, and trust me to call you if you are wanted."

"No." she says steadily, shaking her head. "I'll stay with you till Dr. La Motte comes. I can't bear to be alone. And I hate sleep. When I sleep I dream."

"Rest here, then," he says, putting a cushion under her head, and gently forcing her to lean back on the sofa. "You must not kill yourself with watching, little sister."

"I can't," she replies, in her low quiet voice. "I wish I could! Do you know, Felix, I have felt quite surely and positively of late that some evil was hanging over us? All my dreams have been of mourning—everything hung with black."

Then, after a pause, she adds, suddenly,

"Calla seems well—and happy?"

"She is—thank God!"

"You have seen her several times?"

"Yes."

"In our peaceful days she was with us —one of us," muses Isabel dreamily.

"If she thought she could help you in any time of trouble, she would be with you now," he responds steadily.

"No—let her rest in her sunshine! It won't last." Isabel makes this remark with no tone of malice or envy, rather sadly indeed, quietly and positively. "There is trouble ahead for all of us. And sooner or later it will come to her."

"May the day be distant!" he rejoins. "It is some comfort to look from out the shadows and see that she at least is safe in the daylight."

"For a time! But I see dark days coming, Felix—there as here. There is no peace that lasts—every sun sets. How dark the night is!" she adds, after a pause, shivering. "Light the lamp, dear, quickly —*all the shadows seem alive.*"

Felix lights the lamp at her request, and coming back to her side, he looks search-

ingly, with anxious sadness, into her pale fair face, with the feverish bright light eyes, that have a look as if startled from a dream.

"You are over-tired and nervous, Bell. You have borne too great a strain. Claudine should help you more, or you should get other assistance. I must not have you exhausting yourself."

She smiles faintly, and lays her hand in a grateful caressing way on his; her fingers are like ice; something in their touch, or in his own thoughts, makes him shiver slightly.

"When will Dr. La Motte come?" he says, looking at his watch.

It seems to them long, though it is really not late, before the roll of wheels is heard, and the courtyard gates creak open, and the doctor is come at last. His report is no more favourable. He can hold out no hope; it is a question of time, but he sees no ground for *immediate* alarm. He

will come to-morrow morning, not that he anticipates any great change for the next few hours. Still it is well for them to be prepared for the worst at any moment.

That night, when the doctor has gone, Isabel relieves watch, and takes up her post at her mother's bedside. The rest of the household retire to snatch such rest as they may.

Felix throws himself on his bed dressed, and ready to rise at a moment's warning, and, tired with his travelling, presently falls asleep. He does not know whether he has slept hours or minutes, when he is awakened by Isabel. It is pitch-dark, and he can scarcely trace the faint outline of her pale, ghostly figure in the black shadows.

"What is it? Is she worse?" he says, starting up.

"Not worse, I think; but she seems feverish, and wants *you*."

Mrs. Darrell's eyes are turned towards

the door, watching, as Felix enters with his sister.

"Now leave us, Isabel," she says. "I want Felix—only Felix."

"*Must* I leave you, mother dearest?" the girl asks tenderly, smoothing the pillow and arranging the coverlet with light, deft touches.

Mrs. Darrell turns her head and kisses that gentle, helpful little hand.

"Yes, my darling—my own—leave me —when I ask you. Leave me with Felix now," she says faintly.

Isabel obeys.

"Do not let her excite herself too much," she suggests softly to her brother as she leaves the room.

"Is the door shut—shut fast?" Mrs. Darrell asks, when Isabel has been gone a minute or two, lifting herself up on the pillow with a nervous, feeble eagerness.

"Yes," he answers, trying the handle.

"And—that other door?"

"Both fast shut."

"Then come here, Felix—I have something to say to you. I never meant to tell it you—I thought I could die and take it with me to the grave—but I can't. I can't die without telling you——"

She pauses, out of breath, and tosses and turns on her pillow in a sort of restless pain.

"Don't agitate yourself, dear mother," he says. "Why should you tell me anything that it pains you to speak of—whatever it may be?"

"I must," she gasps wildly. "I must die, I know, but it will kill me now, at once, if I cannot speak it. It lies at my heart like burning fire; it tortures me till I tell you."

He leans over her, silent, wondering, pained to see her so moved, but seeing well that he must not try to keep her silent now. To thwart her desire to speak would

harm her more than the distress of speaking.

"I can trust you, Felix, can I not?" she goes on, brokenly, and with a sort of wild hurry in her faint voice, but reasonably and coherently. "From a child you were always true. You can keep—keep all your life—the secret I tell you now?"

"Yes."

"Swear to me, faithfully, never to breathe a word of it to any living creature, and least of all to my Isabel. Keep it from *her*. Swear that your sister shall never, never know it."

"She never shall. No human creature shall hear a word of it from me."

"If it were not—for Isabel," she says, more faintly, "you might, when I am gone. —But for my daughter's sake never, never a word. And—don't reproach me, Felix, For I can't bear it now."

"Mother!—*I!*" he protests, in a tone of bitter pain, and cannot trust his voice to

say more. He is thinking more of her suffering than wondering what the secret she has to disclose can be.

"I meant it to die with me," she murmurs moaningly, "but I can't—I can't. Living, I could keep it. I can't die with this secret on my soul. It was so long ago, and I have never been able to forget it for a day. It was when—when—I was young. I married young—too young."

"Well, mother?" he questions, in a very low voice, waiting, wondering still.

She closes her eyes and sighs bitterly; then abruptly, with a sort of fluttering gasp and tremor, as though the effort exhausted her strength—

"You were at Godwyn Grange?"

"Yes. I was there three days."

"What did you hear of Percy Godwyn?"

"I only heard his name mentioned; and I saw his portrait."

"You saw his portrait?—Percy's? And *you* saw it?"

"Yes, in the gallery—"

He breaks off abruptly, suddenly, as though a sword-stroke had cut his words. Something flashes upon him in a blaze of blinding light. The room whirls round him; things visible and present lose their form; he sees only that pictured face look down from the walls of the gallery at Godwyn Grange.

"He—he," Mrs. Darrell pants faintly. "It was a lifetime ago—he—nearer—come nearer, Felix—bend your head close down to me—are the doors shut safe?—is no one near us?"

Her voice sinks; she whispers almost inaudibly; but every word sounds clear as thunder in his ear.

CHAPTER VI.

"TOO LATE, TOO LATE, YE CANNOT ENTER NOW!"

DAY has dawned; sharp swords of steel grey light are striking in through the thin crevices of the closed curtains. It is a weird, uncanny hour, whose chill colourlessness weighs more depressingly than midnight blackness on the spirits of those who are waking and watching, when with the new day there dawns no new hope.

They are all gathered round Mrs. Darrell's bed, watching her in hushed and tender vigilance. The truth has come home to all their hearts now that she will never

see the decline of this day that is breaking in cold blue light across the east. As the sky reddens and the red sun rises, her strength is sinking ever lower. Presently in her weakness she becomes incoherent, and murmurs brokenly, in wild and disconnected snatches. But her wandering spirit seems only straying through fields of childhood and of dreamland, drifting aimlessly among passing fancies of no import or meaning. In all those faint wandering words there are none that throw even a glimmer of light on that far back, dark, and hidden phase of her life, of which only one of those present knows the existence, and he knew it not till now. He watches her with untiring, anxious tenderness; he sees that the secret she had held from all till death was close at hand, she will hold from all but him in death itself. Even in her unconscious murmurings, when reason and volition seem vanished, the deep brand of years of secrecy is printed still on the

wandering brain, and near the borderland of that truth it never strays.

When the morning has waxed to full day, a feeble flicker of strength, as the last leap of the quivering and expiring flame, comes back to her. She knows them all, looks round with a sort of yearning affection from one face to another, stretches out her hand to Isabel.

Then Dr. La Motte comes. While Isabel and Mr. Darrell withdraw to consult apart with him, Felix stays by her side.

"Lift me higher," she says faintly.

He raises her in his arms, rests the poor weary head on his shoulder in infinite tenderness and loving care. She breathes more easily, as if a foreshadowing of the great peace were stealing softly and slowly towards her.

"My soul can pass now. The burden is off me," she murmurs; and after a pause goes on in a low and almost inaudible tone, "I thought—you—might have been

hard, but you have been a good son—always, Felix—God bless you!"

He bends and kisses her brow; but he can find no word to utter. His face is as deathly white as hers, as he stands in silence by her side; and in this last hour she leans on him as never in all their lives had she done before. At the last he is her staff and her support; at the last she clings with a certain sense of safety to his strength and faith.

"Keep my trust," she whispers. "I feel content now. Life has been so weary and so long—to me. If pain expiates—if martyrdom atones—I have expiated all. I think my sin is washed away."

These are her last words of confidence to Felix. After these, that final flutter of strength dies slowly out; the flame is flickering down in the socket. They are all gathered round her then; they all watch by her, in hopeless, solemn suspense, to the end.

The end comes about noon. Just at the last she whispers to her husband, "Be good—be good—always—to Isabel," and so sinks back in her daughter's arms, and the troubled soul passes.

Felix is alone in his room, alone with thoughts that fasten like the fangs of the furies on his soul, till it feels numb and dead to all sensation under their grip. But it is not of himself that he has to think now; he has one last trust to discharge this day. There is all a lifetime to think in. Five minutes will discharge this one brief last duty now. He locks the door, and takes from his breast a little packet of papers—only a few faded letters, and two or three worn cuttings of newspaper. They have been locked away in the secret drawer of Mrs. Darrell's private desk for years; he is entrusted to destroy them now. He lights a candle, and slowly tears every letter in slips, and burns them one

by one, watching them shrivel into ashy powder that a breath disperses, unread. He knows enough; he seeks to peer no further into the grave of a buried shame. Let the curtain fall again over that dark past; he will never seek to lift it, or read more of the story than the fact that stares at him grimly out of the shadows. Only on one slip of newspaper he looks with eyes that dare to brave the stab of even this saddest thought of all.

This paper he has seen before, has passed it by unknowing and unconscious, with a casual glance, and read no word of it till now. It is an account of the wreck of the *Calypso* in the South Pacific, giving a list of the lost passengers and crew, and under the head of "Passengers Drowned," the first name is "Percy Godwyn."

He recalls the day of his betrothal to Calla, when, full of their fair and mutual hopes, he glanced indifferently at this Australian paper at his mother's side, and

wondered at her unusual agitation as he told her of his happy love. Strange that he should have taken to her this tale of hope and joy, on that very day when she read how he whose sorrow and whose sin had been linked with hers—he, dead long ago to her, who yet alone with her in the world now bore their secret—had gone down into the deep sea, and left her to bear it alone, safe and free, till death. Strange how close to him had lain the disclosure which then would only have struck him with the shock of bitter shame and pain, but which, had it fallen a brief season later, would have borne healing after the wound.

Now it fell too late, too late! What did it matter now that the barrier between him and love had been an imaginary one? —that following a false mirage, which one word of truth would have dispelled, he had with his own hand thrust his life's joy out of his path? It could not matter now.

The blow had fallen too late to bear its balm with it; the iron entered into his soul with no soft cooling touch near now to comfort and to soothe.

From the curse he had deemed he shared with the rest of the family, it is true that he was free; but this new light that had dawned on him to show him his freedom, showed him, too, bare and unveiled, a wasted sacrifice, a blighted past, a clouded future, sorrow that was not merely selfish, sufferings that he had not borne alone.

He recalled with strangely mingled feelings, that yet all partook of pain, those hours when, in the gallery of Godwyn, he had looked unconsciously on the pictured dead of those past generations, from which he, too, unknowing, had drawn his life—remembered how lightly, in passing, his attention had been called to his own resemblance to that one, outcast in life, forgiven in death, whose bones, brought from

the field of Marston Moor, lay mouldering under the marble tomb in Godwyn churchyard, and to that other on whose image he had looked with no thrill, no stir of the pulse, no touch of instinct or presentiment, whose living face he had never looked upon, and over whose body rolled now the long swell of the Pacific waves.

These lifelike shadows of the dead, whose moveless lips had made no sign to him—whose blank eyes had stared down on him from the panelled walls, unrecognising, as if disowning him—their images came back to haunt him now. They were his forefathers, whom he might never claim, from whom he was for ever outcast, whose kindred he must conceal tenfold more strictly and sacredly than if it were *his* sin, *his* shame.

For his own safety, he could never have felt this sense of an iron responsibility bound upon his life. In defence of no crime of his own could he have stood for-

ward facing fate as he stood now, sworn to shield through life to death *her* sorrowful secret. For no suffering of his own could his heart have ached in such sore compassion as it bled now for the worse than wasted life of her who had not ruined her own future only, every one of whose errors had spread desolation around on other hearts and homes than hers.

We cannot sin to ourselves alone; in every sin we sow the seed of giant sorrows for others to reap with us.

But Felix did not think this now; he only thought, in infinite tenderness and sympathy and love, "The pity of it!"

The whole story he would never seek to know. It was as a buried volume, closed and locked a lifetime since, and buried with her now. The key was lost that would have opened to him the history of the cyclone that had swept down into her early life, and seized it in the resistless grip of the whirlwind, and wrecked and ruined it,

and passed—and left her to wake as from a dream of tempest and fever and tropic storm, with a dreary future before her, and a desolated past behind.

The time dragged wearily and sadly on at La Basse-Rive; the hour of the funeral came and went; and then, when those darkest of the dark days were over, they began to put into words the plans which, during this short sad time, had been vaguely taking form in their minds. First among these suggestions stood an immediate departure from La Basse-Rive. This had been under discussion before—indeed, it was probably only Mrs. Darrell's illness which had prevented its being seriously considered. Although she had not appeared to give any support to the idea, it is most likely that Mr. Darrell's wish would have carried the day, and he was strongly of opinion that the disturbed state of all the country around rendered a move ad-

visable. His wife's illness, however, had of course put a stop to all such schemes. Now Mr. Darrell contemplated taking Isabel to England, and after a few days spent in London, partly in rest and partly in business, moving on to some pretty, retired country village, where they would reside quietly out of the world, while Felix returned to his work as literary correspondent at the scene of war.

Felix's own desire was to proceed back to Versailles and resume his round of duty immediately; but he perceived that a duty nearer home claimed him for a few days first. Mr. Darrell seemed broken down and helpless since his bereavement; Isabel bore it superficially with marvellous calm; their mutual sorrow drew the two together in a way that Felix observed with comfort and relief; but they both alike turned to him for direction in all practical matters connected with the departure and the journey. They were both so totally unaccustomed

to travelling that Felix determined he must at least see them safe to London, and, if possible, spend a day or two there in putting them in the right way to do the best for their comfort, and laying down plans for them to carry out. He felt no scruple nor twinge of conscience in leaving Isabel in her stepfather's care. It seemed the best, the only thing to be done. Gertrude's children were dear almost as his own could have been to George Darrell now. He read in Isabel's fair features the reproduction of her mother's youth; he leant on Felix with an almost blind reliance and faith. Felix felt he could not leave these two till he had seen them securely out of this disturbed land, and safely harboured in the peace and tranquillity on the other side of the silver streak.

So it happened that a week or so after the funeral the Château de la Basse-Rive was "To be Let," and was likely to remain "to be let" so long as the stormy time

which shook the country to its centre lasted. The shutters were put up; dust gathered in the deserted rooms; silence brooded where Love and Joy had reigned, and abdicated, and in whose abandoned kingdom Death had held his court. The grass grew longer and wilder than ever in the orchard where Calla and Felix had laughed and loved the merry morning hours away; and from out the old home, with its sunshine and its shadows, they had passed for ever.

It is a clear Autumn evening, and Felix is in London again. Mr. Darrell and Isabel have gone to their rooms, tired and depressed; it is their first evening in the great city, and he is left alone. Once more the same city holds him and Calla; and between them now he knows the barrier is down. No bar holds them apart, save loyalty and honour. Such bars have broken ere now—bars deemed strong as wrought steel, massive as dungeon grates,

have snapped in sunder like a thread of silk when all the mighty force of Love has dashed itself against them.

It is not of this possibility that Felix is thinking now. He is forming no plan, dreaming not of the future nor of the past, conscious neither of hopes nor fears, filled only with the one sense that at this present hour he is near to Calla again. However far apart their life-paths may lie, they breathe the air of the same city; the mild wind that whispers in at his open window may bear her breath, may even now have hovered round and kissed her cheek. The sense of her nearness oppresses him vaguely; he wishes the seas were between them again; and yet a magnet more powerful even than his will draws him towards her. He flings the window wide, leans out, looks in the direction where she lives. How cool and fresh the evening air is! The Autumn night is not warm, but yet the

room seems suddenly oppressive, stifling. He throws the door open, and on a sudden impulse goes downstairs and out into the quiet street.

He takes the way to where she lives, of course—with no intention of seeing her; nay more, with the firm resolution *not* to see her. But he is drawn irresistibly to hover round the spot, nearer, nearer, till he stands at the very door of the house where the Yorkes at present have their town-quarters.

They are at home, evidently—the dining-room is lit up, and he dimly sees moving shadows against the blind. They are only faintly limned and distant—he cannot distinguish them, but in his mind's eye he pictures the group. Mrs. King, shadowy in the background, bending her head over some interminable embroidery; Tom Yorke smoking and swinging lazily in his big American rocking-chair by the fire; Lusada probably, almost certainly, is

there too; and Calla—that slim shadow crossing now must be hers.

Tramp, tramp—a policeman comes along on his nightly beat. He glances at Felix half suspiciously as he passes by. Felix smiles to himself, thinking that it is not at all improbable that he appears to strangers in the light of one cherishing felonious intentions. It is amusing, though it might under some circumstances be inconvenient, to be regarded as a possible burglar, and he prepares to obey the injunction that has *not* been given by the fast-disappearing guardian of the peace, and "move on." He has not moved far, however, when the strains of martial music become audible, and a brass band, apparently returning from some festivity, and followed by a tail of small boys running at its back, and a sprinkling of street-stragglers on the pavement at its side, comes marching down the street, to the appropriate air of "See the Conquering Hero comes."

Several windows open as this warrior-like melody clangs out brazen-throated along the hitherto quiet road, and the procession adds the illumination of its torches to the dull yellow glare of the street-lamps. Among these windows is the one on which Felix's attention has been fixed. Under cover of the passers-by who loiter on the pavement to watch the minstrel band, he draws near and looks, and so sees Calla, as she pushes the blind aside and leans forward to observe what is going on, and the light of the nearest gas-lamp on the pavement streams on her face. In just her old careless freedom and the unconsciousness which is graceful because so naïve and natural, she rests one arm upon the sill, and looks out leisurely; then she glances back at Lusada, who comes to her side, and pushes the window higher, and moves the blind more out of her way as he bends down to her and speaks in the free and familiar way of acknowledged affection.

Felix is in the deepest shadow of the porch columns—they are in the full light. The band is passing on out of sight, some of the passers-by are following it, some lingering to look back at it, one or two joining the string of stragglers in the rear. Lusada and Calla still linger at the open window, Felix still watches them.

She is all in black, he sees, and thinks with a thrill of painful pleasure it is probably for his loss she has put on mourning. But she is smiling as she plays with the jet chain round her neck, and glances up at Lusada, utterly unconscious that any eyes are fixed on her. She can see no one in the street who is not gaping after the band; she never dreams how clearly the lamplight strikes on their two faces and photographs them on the sight of one who stands silent in the shadows. How lily-white she looks in the dead black of this dress! the slim fingers twined among the jet beads shine against them like snow. There is

just a shade of pensiveness in her eyes, of tenderness in her smile. She is even more beautiful so than if her brightness were wholly unsoftened by a shadow.

And he—he looks a worthy mate for her, with his figure of an athlete, his tawny leonine locks and sun-bronzed brow, his features somewhat stern in their massive grandeur, but lit up by the rare sweet smile that ever answers hers.

As one looking back into a lost Paradise, Felix looks on them. In the stern and utter renunciation of this gaze that he means shall be the last he will fix on her till years shall have plucked the sting from the wound that tingles to-day, he all unconsciously sets the seal upon their futures.

"Come in out of the cold; this wind will chill you," Lusada says, half tenderly, half authoritatively, putting his hand on her shoulder to draw her back. She protests with a sort of playful waywardness for a moment—then suddenly yields with the

utmost docility, yields—Felix thinks—as if it were very sweet to her so to yield.

She moves back, out of the cold, into the warm lighted room, out of his sight, and leaves him in the dark, in the cold, alone,—with the shadows closing round his spirit, and the cold wind seeming to chill his heart.

CHAPTER VII.

"LOYAL JE SERAI DURANT MA VIE."

THE following day Isabel goes out early to pay a quiet visit to Calla; Mr. Darrell betakes himself to the city on business. Felix excuses himself from accompanying his sister to the Yorkes, on the ostensible ground that he too has business, being only in London for so few days, that must be attended to. First of all there are letters that must be written, then commissions that must be executed, interviews that must be appointed. He is just finishing his letters when a visitor is announced —Mr. Lusada.

Felix is glad, and not at all surprised, to see him. He knew well that directly Lu-

sada heard he was in town, he would be with him. Lusada had received the news this morning, and here he is accordingly.

For a few moments after their greeting, Felix wonders whether his friend's eyes—those eagle eyes with their Indian acuteness, that in the old days were ever first to descry the little cloud of dust on the border of the prairie—the stir that was a sign of danger in the tangle of the brushwood—had detected him last night as he stood in the shadows looking up at the lighted window. But Lusada had never even dreamt of his presence, neither had the dimmest idea dawned on Calla that he, seeing her unseen, was near.

Our sometimes-boasted "instincts" tell us very little after all. Is it that the polish of our civilization rubs the edge off them—that they were keener in our savage days, when such intuitions, half animal, half spiritual, more necessary, reached a higher development? Now-a-days we tell

the story of any exceptional manifestation of these dormant instincts, when for once they wake and cry aloud in our souls, and pass over the powerlessness with which, as a rule, they fail to make their voices heard. Where one fitful boding tells us truly, a hundred times we brush close to the truth unknowing. Where once a pulse thrills unaccountably and strangely in the unknown presence of the beloved, a hundred times no electric current sweeps into our soul to tell us that the other "half of our perfect heart" is beating near.

Julius Lusada has heard, of course, of Mrs. Darrell's death; it was by letter from Felix that the news reached him, as the two friends never drop their correspondence for long, and the one is always made aware of the chief events that are happening to the other.

He does not say much; but his presence is a sympathetic one, and the two men understand each other thoroughly. A grasp

of the hand, a word of comradeship, says so much between man and man; they leave effusion and demonstration to women, whom it becomes well enough—except those rare ones who are dowered with the golden gift of the true sympathetic silence. There is a good deal of its imitation current, a cheap alloy of indifference or embarrassed distance, just washed with the colouring of the pure gold; the real thing is too pure and too highly refined ever to be otherwise than rare.

Lusada touches but lightly on the past, and turns at once to the future.

"Back to the battle-fields, eh?" he says. "That sounds tempting. I'd have half a mind to change my plans—only it would be rather late in the day. I am off to Egypt and the Holy Land to-morrow."

"Egypt—to-morrow?" Felix repeats, and adds, after a pause, inquiringly—"Alone?"

"Yes—that is, I meet Vaughan at Os-

tend, and join the Grahams in Italy. We shall strike down through Switzerland sharp, and make straight for Alexandria. I'll do the trip in a couple of months or so, I reckon, and get back to London. You see, Egypt and Palestine have to be done, and this is a good time to do them, as I'm not likely to be here next Winter."

"Going back?"

"Next fall I hope to be away in the South Sea Islands—not alone," he adds, an unconscious look of proud contentment betraying itself in his eye.

"She will enjoy the new life of the islands," observes Felix.

"Yes, it will be a fresh world to her, and lotos-eating will be sweet, for a time," the other replies. Both of them evidently regard the mention of her name as superfluous. "Will you come up there with me now?" Lusada continues, with apparent irrelevance, as the invitation is not meant

to apply to the South Sea Isles, but is pointed by a vague jerk of the head in the direction where the abode of the Yorkes may be supposed to be.

"No, I think not, thanks. My sister is there. For my own part, I do not suppose I shall manage to pay them a visit this time—my stay in town is so short. You will say all that's to be said from me—to all."

"Yes," assents Lusada, in the brusque, unsmiling way which those who know him know holds not a touch of sternness, but merely means thoughtfulness. Then he adds suddenly, with his usual straightforward charging at a point as if to take any difficulty by storm—"You'll not see her, then?"

Felix pauses just a moment before he answers,

"No. It's best not, I think."

There is a silence, during which the two men look straight into each other's

souls. They are neither of them of the nature that doubts and questions, that gives half trust, and dares not count on more than half loyalty. For a moment Felix fancies he reads the question in Lusada's eyes, "Best for *whom?*" but the question is never answered, never uttered.

Lusada would never forgive a treachery, but he would never suspect one. He would pardon a fickleness, never a falsehood. Be daring and frank, as he is himself, and his tolerance is limitless. For betrayal, for cowardice, he has no mercy; he would almost absolve one for not being true *to* him who dared to be true *with* him. But that those he trusts should ever deal otherwise than truly with him, he is himself too audaciously frank, too recklessly generous, to suspect. There is a great deal of the chivalry of the days of the Round Table in this western border-ranger. In Lancelot's place he might have erred as Lancelot, but had he reigned in place of the Blameless

King, he probably would have looked on earth through the illusion of the lofty ideal, and built on the reeds of Guinevere's love and Lancelot's truth his rock-like faith, even as Arthur did.

Now he leaves the question in his heart unuttered; his eyes meet Felix's clear, loyal, answering gaze with no inquiry, only with a steady trust. In the mutual instinct of their manhood, they shrine Calla's name apart sacredly from all further allusion and discussion. Only after the brief silence, Lusada says quietly but earnestly,

"There's to be no break in our friendship, Felix—there could be none?"

"There could be none indeed. The links should be drawn closer than ever in the coming days. When you are married, it will hold fast and firm. But just now——"

They grasp hands, and not a word more is said or needed to be said on that subject.

"I leave town in a day or two," Felix observes, in a light, conversational tone. "My sister and Mr. Darrell stay here awhile."

"What route do you take?" asks Lusada.

"Dover to Calais, and push on to Versailles as fast as the pitfalls in the path will let me. Travelling is no joke there now-a-days."

"No. Now, that's the kind of life that's *living*," Lusada rejoins, half enviously. "I go from Dover too. The Yorkes go down with me to-morrow. Yorke has got some friend there, and is going to stay a few days. But I cross to Ostend, and so on to Switzerland."

They then talked travelling plans and politics and the war as if no such thing as a woman existed.

Felix, as a partisan, was unsatisfactory, or at least, he would have seemed so to those partisans whose pride is that they

can see but one side of the shield.

Fresh from France as he was, from the daily witnessing of her sorrows and her struggles, allied by the old ties of association and affection to France, he yet could not be blind to the fact that she herself had forged the steel to strike to her own heart, and that in this household divided against itself, her own self-conflict tore her strength asunder. He gave freely its due of respect and admiration to the iron and immovable unity of the enemy's resistless force; and while too earnest a worshipper of true Liberty to be an upholder of the Empire, yet his personal sympathy lay with the dethroned sovereign.

Lusada looked on passing events with a good deal of the same spirit. Although his tendency was wholly and solely to the worship of Power, in whatever form it came, and for whatever cause it worked; although his heroes of the great Revolution were Mirabeau and

the giant Danton, as representing physical force and the magnetism of personal power; although the strength that fights through the field to victory was his deity—he offered still deeper homage to that strength when stricken down. When a stately tree fell sapped, when a once ascendant strength sank down defeated by external and overwhelming forces, his instincts led him to sympathise with the chief, whether to the cause he was friend or foe. Born with the gift of leading, his spirit went ever with the leader; and with all the chivalry of his nature he stood forward now in sympathy with the fallen ruler—under whose power (even though its foundations were built deep in one day of bloodshed) the land he loved had seemed to thrive, had looked so fair and stately a growth in its prosperity and peace, none knew the canker that was at the root—who, since he first grasped the imperial sceptre, swayed it ever mildly, true friend and staunch ally, till on him the

ghost of a dead day, near twenty years past buried, rose in retribution at last.

While Lusada and Felix in their conversation on current topics apparently ignored Calla's existence, she and Isabel found themselves once more together after several months of separation. Calla was overflowing with a sympathy that she scarcely dared express. She had sincerely mourned Mrs. Darrell's death, had shed many bitter tears when the news reached her, had put aside all her pretty bright colours, and worn all outward signs of mourning as true tokens of a genuine grief. Now she wanted to take Isabel to her heart and tell her how truly she shared her sorrow; but she dared not.

We cannot approach the majesty of a grief too closely. Isabel seemed to Calla now something sacred and apart. She dared not lavish the old impulsive caresses and sympathies on this pale, silent girl, about whom there seemed to her fancy something

shadowy and unearthly now, with her marble-white face, almost transparent in its delicacy, her dreamy, sapphire eyes, that were ever wandering and aspiring in a wild unrest.

For Isabel, she looked under Calla's genuine tenderness and sympathetic grief, and saw her blooming youth, her bright future.

"We are dedicated to opposite goddesses, Calla, you and I," she said once, with her slow smile, that vaguely suggested something strange behind its sweetness. "Or at least, it seems so now. There's this difference in our lots—my goddess is always ready to receive those whom yours discards. But your bright goddess of Joy shuts her temple against us once vowed to Grief."

Calla would have liked to talk of Felix, or rather to make Isabel talk of him; but Isabel was perversely monosyllabic on the subject of her brother.

"He is coming to see us, I suppose?" Calla observed, casually.

"No," replied Isabel, incisively, "he is not."

"Will he leave London, then, without seeing us at all?" asked Calla, colouring a little.

"Yes—exactly so."

Conscious that Isabel was watching her with calm, sad, scrutinizing eyes, Calla raised her head and met the look steadily.

"He knows best," she said, quite calmly and reliantly. "If he thinks it is best, it is best."

"You think so still?"

"Still and ever. We do not change our natures because our ways of life and relations to each other change."

"Nor change our faith, although we change our love?" questioned Isabel, in her sweet, even voice.

Here a well-known step and voice in the hall announced Lusada's arrival, and

Calla, murmuring a hasty word of excuse, vanished from the room. Outside of all natural eagerness, she felt some unexplained but deep reluctance to meeting him before Isabel. She flushed more with embarrassment than shyness as she reentered the room with him. Under Isabel's eyes she was conscious of a vague uneasiness. In those meetings with Felix himself during the past Summer, she had known no such embarrassment—perhaps from the deepest feelings all things akin to embarrassment are exiled, perhaps because a woman's eyes are quickest to read a woman's heart.

Isabel extended her hand to Lusada with her grave, dreamy look and a faint smile. She looked so fair and fragile and delicate in her deep mourning; he held her hand and looked down on her with a kindly and admiring and yet most compassionate sympathy.

"I am glad to meet you again, Miss

Isabel; but how frail and pale you are," he said, according to his habit of speaking out his thoughts.

If Calla had been jealous every time Julius Lusada spoke softly to, and gazed tenderly and deferentially at, any other woman, she would have lived as the chronic prey of the green and yellow monster. But fortunately for her own peace of mind she had not the faintest tendency to jealousy, nor had she the slightest cause, as it came as naturally as the breath of life to Lusada to fix on each and every fair face—no matter whose, what, where, or when—a gaze that evidenced his appreciation of its fairness. Calla was calm and content in his presence, and to his look and smile she responded always instantly with a ready brightness, of which Isabel's soft, watchful eyes made a note.

"Well, Isabel," observed Felix, interrogatively, when his sister returned to their temporary home. She answered the drift

of the inquiry plainly and concisely at once.

"She looks very pretty and blooming; she seems in very good health and spirits."

"They are all well, I suppose?"

"Yes. She asked after you, and I told her that you were not going to see her," said Isabel, quietly.

"And what did she say?"

"Do you want to know?"

"No," he answered, somewhat abruptly. "I don't know why I asked you. I have no reason for wanting to pry into her thoughts and words."

"It was nothing much," responded Isabel. "She only said that you were always right, and that whatever you thought best was best, now and ever. And then *he* came in, and she looked as if she thought *he* was always right."

"You judge her harshly, Bell; you seem to have no sympathy with her now that she—is happy."

"I don't judge her unjustly, I think, and I *have* sympathy for her, for I think the foundation on which the happiness is built is insecure."

CHAPTER VIII.

"WHAT! GONE WITHOUT A WORD?"

IF our mortal eyes could but pierce through the impenetrable shades, and reach the regions where the Daughters of Darkness sit weaving the web of Fate, not the least marvellous thing to note in the making of our destiny would be the material whereof it is woven. We should see that there is nothing in the heavens above or in the earth beneath, nothing in our own natures of divine or devilish, that does not furnish the wherewithal for these spinners to work. From every mortal virtue, as from every passion and every crime, they draw the skeins to wind and weave.

If on the veiled faces of the three mystic

sisters a smile may find a place, how grimly they must smile as they lay their hands alike on our love and on our truth, our frailty and our faith, and twist one and all to their allotted ends, and out of our highest aspirations, out of our struggles after the noblest, draw the threads to weave us the darkest destiny! Yet still, when the poisoned robe clings closest that dark Lachesis fitted for us, and Clotho spun from the tangle of the conflict of our inmost souls at her second sister's will, then "sudden the worst turns the best to the brave," and merciful Atropos cuts through the bonds that bind us down to the life where we are her sisters' prey.

There is no tragic doom that blackens earth to which now and again its victims have not been dragged by fetters forged of their own faith, and riveted by their own self-sacrifice.

The many at whom the world laughs, who "meant for the best," but whose best

intents miscarried, are not proven in mistake by failure. It falls too often that the *finis* of the noblest effort is the dreary utterance of the old Jacobite ballad, defiant in its despair, and strong in its defeat,

> "Now all is done that man can do,
> And all is done in vain."

Felix Grey, for one, meant for the best; and, as many a one has done before him, when he stood at the cross-roads, in a loyalty regardless of himself, for honour's sake and at duty's summoning, he set his foot on the narrow path that led him and others to an end he little guessed.

It is again a cool early Autumn night in London; the waiter has asked if the gentleman in No. 8 would like a fire, but Felix has all his life been of hardy habit, and accustomed to variations of climate, and has declined the offered luxury. With its fireless grate and stiff furniture, and its pictureless walls, whose bareness is only broken by a bunch of garish paper flowers

in a vase on the mantelpiece, the room looks dreary and un-homelike, as if it never had had, and probably never would have, a permanent occupant. Two tall candles, in still taller, gaunt, and ungraceful plated candlesticks, that seem to have overgrown themselves, are flickering on the table, and by their light Felix is reading a letter, or rather looking at it, with the fixed, vacant gaze of deep thought.

He does not need to read the written words again—he has re-read them a dozen times, and knows them by heart. They tell him nothing new, nothing important, only they are in Calla's well-known clear womanly hand. It is only a brief, friendly letter, scarcely more than a note, and supposed to be written by her merely as a representative of the Yorke family, to say that they are at Dover; they have that day seen Julius Lusada off on the first stage of his journey to Egypt; they remain at Dover a few days, and as they hear that

Felix intends returning by that route, they hope he will come and see them on his way, and at least take a quiet dinner with them all, even if he cannot stay a day or two. It lays stress upon the fact that "papa" will be glad to see him, but gives no information as to the writer's own sentiments, and is signed, "Your affectionate friend and sister."

Felix smiles sadly as his eyes rest on that last word—"sister." He remembers when they two last stood face to face, with impassable barriers between them—divided, above all, by the towering truth that he who was absent trusted them—how even then all the power and the passion of the past poured down upon them and shook them with the storm of memory, and the severed force of their divided faith struggled against itself, until at last from the might of a loyalty that after its one wavering seized upon its post again, and stood more fast and firm than ever—of a

love that towered high enough to trample its own weakness down into its slave, they gathered strength to face their final farewell.

In that last farewell they had been strong, and by that farewell they must stand.

His sister! Poor child, he thought, it is too soon and too late for that!

He read between the lines of her letter; he knew, though not a word of condolence was there, that with all her warm and loving heart she was longing to say some word of sympathy to him, yet that she looked upon his loss with too tender a reverence to put her feelings into written words, in which indeed, as a rule, all attempt at condolence or comfort seems but

> "Common-place,
> And vacant chaff well meant for grain."

She longed to know how he had borne, how he had been affected by, the loss of

the mother who—even though he had not been her favourite child—had been ever a tender mother to him; she yearned to tell him how truly she shared his grief, how during all the years of her girlhood she had held *his* mother only less dear than the memory of her own. And he knew her well enough to guess that such must be the tenor of her feelings.

But of this invitation he would not avail himself. It was tempting enough, too tempting. Just because it looked so alluring, so innocent, so sweet and simple and harmless a pleasure, he took warning, and resolved to hold aloof. True, it was only in the easy and unforced and natural course of events that he should pay this visit to the family whom he counted among his closest friends. It might pass off as lightly, pleasantly, and simply as those days at Godwyn Grange had passed. But the train of thought and memory that arose from the very name of Godwyn, was one

that fixed him in the resolution he was forming.

If he went to her now, he would see her in Lusada's absence, see her, knowing in his heart that between them now her betrothal to that absent one was the only valid bar, knowing that in this case the influence of presence would wax powerful as that of absence waned—nay, to face all the truth, knowing more than this, knowing that over the passionate fidelity of the deep under-currents of her nature—no matter how the surface waves swelled in their ebb and flow—the sway of the past must endure. The tide might rise and retreat as the moon waxed and waned; the depths beneath the wave currents were moveless.

He knew by sure instinct, and a strange insight into her nature, that it seemed he had only learned since he had lost her, that his power over her lasted in all its pristine force. Let him only exert his influence—

let him even only allow himself to be passively led by impulses far from evil, and leave his influence so to do its own work, and she would be as utterly and helplessly under his sway now as on the day when she yielded her full love to him, and laid down all her soul selfless and lost in his.

Had she ever failed to obey his wish, whether he bade her suffer or rejoice? He could not but know that, over a nature such as he now knew hers to be, the old first influence must still retain its power for good or evil; he caught even a distant glimmering of the truth to which he had been blind, that when they were parted, it was only to *his* friend that her heart turned, only of *his* hero that she made her second idol. Feeling as he did, could he venture to see her now that Lusada was far away?

If he had been blinder—if he had felt a less certain conviction of the innate fidelity (it might be morbid, irrational, but he could only see that it sprang from the

root of strength and truth), of the nature that superficially was so impetuous and impressionable—if, above all, he had loved her less, he might have decided otherwise. But he loved her so dearly!

Even now, far on in this nineteenth century, the great secret mainspring of human nature works unrusted in its eternal grooves; still the old and oft-told tale enacts itself again and again around us in our daily life; still even yet hearts burn and break with the old, old love—the double yearning of mortal heart and immortal soul.

There is a so-called Love, of the imagination born, and by the imagination that bore it raised into a deity; it is fair, and pure, and poetic, but yet it is but a false god, this love which demands artistic perfection for the breath of its feeble life, which lives upon joy and beauty and youth, and smiles in the satisfaction of a dainty and delicate fancy—which jars with grief and shrinks

from pain, and closes its sensitive ears against the discord of human suffering—which thrives on hours of poetic sadness almost as well as on those of romantic joy, and which, though it may abide faithfully through a picturesque moonlight effect of storm, retreats shuddering from realistic calamity too bare and ugly and earthly for it to idealise.

But these pale shadows, that call themselves Love, melt away into the air whereof they were fashioned when the true God speaks.

This true love, that lives still, and for which still here and there a heart will count the world well lost, is mighty alike in the moral and the physical world. Before terror, shame, and pain, it does not turn away; in the face of the ghastly and realistic horrors of the fire, the wreck, the ambulance, and the battle-field, it does not quail; it stands faithful when the "painted veil" of the ideal is torn aside, and fears

not to look on the rugged and scarred features of bare humanity in all their mingled beauty and ugliness—that ugliness which is often but distorted beauty.

Nobler still, the true power is powerful even to rise above the temptations of its own strength, strong enough to sacrifice itself.

This is the love that moves the world. It was this love that swayed Felix till he felt his faith lay in the balance of one day's decision, and alone with this love, in all its strength and weakness, he fought his last great battle now.

The silence of the great city's nightly sleep has not yet settled down. Still there is an occasional stir of cheerful common life. Now and then wheels rattle along the street—the last drops of the day-storm of traffic. Now there is the noise of a distant door shutting; then the sound of people talking in the street comes up to the window; and clear above the

confused murmur breaks out perhaps a laugh, an oath, a loud "good night" called to some passing friend.

Life is going on all around him, and in the stillness of his solitary room every little sound strikes distinctly on his ear—he is silent in a sort of strained fixity of attention, and seems to listen, and yet he hears them not. He is moveless and impenetrable as if he were turned to marble, in this intensity of thought and nerve, while he wrestles out the last question with himself, and tramples down the temptation that tugs at his heart, and pleads that there is no reason why before he plunges back into the rough, roving, hard-working life that awaits him, he should not see her once more.

To see her once more—only that. Yet it means to look into those eyes that are as the twin lode-stars of his life, to meet those loveliest of eyes brim-full of true and tender and half timid sympathy. It means

to see the smile flash over her face in answer to his smile, and the sweet lips settle into a mournful earnestness when the moment of parting comes again. It means to be by her side when Julius Lusada is far away—by her side, knowing that she loved him first, that when he separated himself from her he sacrificed himself all needlessly and in vain—feeling in every pulse of his heart that even as he loved her from the first he must love her to the last.

Meaning all this, it means danger.

That danger he will not risk. Lusada trusts him, has left him in free and loyal faith. He will be worthy of that faith. In letter and in spirit, in look and deed and word, even to the uttermost, he will be true to his mother's trust, true to his own honour.

He takes her letter up, and kisses it. Kissing the words her hand has traced is a mere piece of sentiment, but at such

moments of their lives even strong and sensible and practical men commit strange follies.

"No, darling, no, my darling," he whispers to the senseless paper in a waste of passionate tenderness. "Never again. You will think me unkind, but it is better so. With my own free will I will never see you again, I swear I never will, until you are his wife!"

On a sudden impulse, rare in him, an outbreak of the blind destructive instinct —(which survives to remind us in our hour of sharpest pain that the animal and the savage, though subordinated, is not dead in us)—he tears the paper almost fiercely into a hundred fragments. When he has done this he cools down suddenly, and looks on the torn atoms regretfully. It is surprising how such a little thing can give such pain.

"But little bees have bitter stings."

He feels as if he had torn up a last

living hope by the roots out of his heart.

"There, it's all over now," he says to himself, as if some painful operation were just over; and released from the tranced strain of the struggle, he comes back to the consciousness of common life.

He looks at the clock. "How late it is!" The street is silent now; only a dog is howling in the distance. What a weird, wailing sound!—it makes night hideous. Nearer at hand a door bangs; some one is pulling about a box overhead; a step comes along the passage; the "boots" is probably collecting his charges from outside the doors. Felix returns to practical considerations, and flings open his door to give the man an order.

"Call me in time for the early Dover train to-morrow."

By the next morning's express accordingly Felix travels to Dover.

It is the train that meets the boat; he

will pass straight from the platform to the deck; he has sent no line nor message to the Yorkes, but will write to them from France. When he alights at Dover, he looks along the platform; he cannot tell himself whether it is the thrill of hope or fear with which he wonders whether each tall, slight, dark-haired girl, of whom he catches a passing glimpse in the crowd, is she.

But she is not here. What should she be doing here among the hurrying, pushing swarm of passengers on the platform? The only voice that hails him, and the only face he knows, belong to a bachelor friend, who greets him with "hail-fellow-and-well-met" surprise, and who is bound for the coasts of France on an errand not altogether unsimilar to his own.

Now they have passed down the gangway; they are on the deck. There is no great crowd of voyagers pressing to cross the Channel now, but there is the usual

row of visitors along the pier, on their daily amusement bent, leaning over the railings to watch the passengers file down the narrow way, and scatter themselves over the deck, and the luggage shower down the shoot crashingly, at the risk of considerable damage to itself, listening to the babel buzz that is in literal truth a confusion of tongues, and altogether enjoying the mild excitement which seems to all seaport *habitués* to become an after-breakfast necessity, of "seeing off" the boat.

The bachelor friend recognizes some one on the pier, and waves his hand gaily. Felix looks along the line, and sees no familiar face.

Now the passengers are all on board; the last of the luggage has crashed down on deck; and there is a stentorian shout of "All for the shore!" A little bell rings in a falsetto key; a shrill whistle follows it up with an ear-piercing shriek; the gangway is withdrawn, and with a heavy

splash the loosened ropes fall into the water.

Some instinct, he knows not what, for he hears no voice call him, draws Felix to turn suddenly, and cast one last look along the pier. And there he sees Calla. She has just arrived upon the scene, just made her way to the front rank of those who are leaning over the rails. Searching over the deck with a quick and eager glance, she too recognizes him. And so, as the steamer swings away from the pier, their eyes meet.

They look at each other across the narrow strip of sea, so near each other, each can read the look upon the other's face. But that narrow gulf widens and widens; the green waves bubble and boil up between them as the revolving paddle churns the water into foam.

In that last look their souls meet, wedded in one wild longing and regret. Yet for a moment they are scarcely conscious that

this longing is pain; they are so lost to all past, present, and future, in the single sense of each other's presence. But swifter and swifter the boat swings away; how quickly wider the green gulf yawns! and higher the waves splash up and surge against the steamer's sides! Their faces are fading from each other's sight; and over both there sweeps an icy desolation of irrevocable severance.

Felix's friend coming to his side to offer some cheerful comment as to the unpromising prospect of the voyage, and point out the high waves running at sea, finds him absorbed in hurriedly adjusting a field-glass to his eye, and following the direction thereof, thinks it well to discreetly hold aloof a little longer.

The glass brings Calla near to Felix again, though she is losing now all sight of him. He sees her look of vain longing and regret; he sees the tears of bitter disappointment brim over her eyes. He can

see her no longer; the picture is blurred and blotted; the glass is strangely dim.

It is thus that they look their last upon each other, with no syllable spoken to break the spell of the silence that has lasted between them since that Summer morning, only a brief season ago, when hand in hand they faced the truth and took their true farewell.

BOOK III.

THE LAND OF THE LEAL.

"As the first sound of flooded hill-waters
Is heard by people of the meadow-grass
Or ever a wandering waif of ruin pass
With whirling stones and foam of the brown stream,
Flaked with fierce yellow; so, beholding him,
She felt, before tears came, her eyelids wet."

SWINBURNE.

CHAPTER IX.

"O DEATH IN LIFE! THE DAYS THAT ARE NO MORE!"

MR. DARRELL and Isabel only remained in London for a few days after the Yorkes' return from Dover; but during that brief time Calla and Isabel were of course a great deal together. Mr. Darrell regarded it as the best and most natural thing that Isabel, alone in a strange city with him, solitary and sad in these early days of mourning, without a friend or companion, with scarcely even an acquaintance in England, save the Yorkes, should spend most of her time, while he was about on business, with Calla, instead of

brooding alone; and the Yorkes made her ever warmly welcome.

Yet somehow it seemed now that the relations of the two girls were undefinably altered. They met with the usual expressions of affection; there was no change obvious in either of their manners—nothing definite whereby either could have accused the other of estrangement or coldness; and yet some change between them there was, and the only thing certain is that it had not originated with Calla. If into the old free loving familiarity there seemed to have crept a restraint, if across the once perfect, tender, limitless confidence there seemed to have drifted a thin veil that hid their souls from each other, it was not Calla's fault, and was to her a perplexity and a pain. The change in her friend was so subtle and intangible, she could scarcely have described or explained it; only neither meeting and parting kisses, however cordial, nor conversation, however

friendly, seemed to blow aside even for a moment the light, chill veil that had fallen between their hearts.

When last these two had parted, at the Château de la Basse-Rive, Calla's happiness in Lusada's love was a new and uncertain thing—the glimmering dawn of a day that might prove storm or sunshine. Now the morning was settled fair and calm; Calla was openly and avowedly happy; there seemed no cloud upon the bright horizon of her future; her pain was of the past, and if there lurked a little secret shadow in her heart it was a hidden one. Now Isabel looked on Calla's life, and on her own. Into her dreamy, introspective, and fanciful nature, affectionate, but ever strange and capricious even in her demonstrations of affection, a drop of bitterness seemed to have been poured. Sorrow had not melted her into clinging love and need of sympathy—in her sorrow she shut herself apart.

Calla felt, with a sadness that cost her a tear sometimes, that Isabel was far away from her now, far beyond any influence of hers; they might sit side by side, and hand in hand, but she could never reach Isabel, alone down in the depths of her great grief.

Sometimes she fancied that in fraternal loyalty Isabel resented the brightness of her friend's prospects in this second betrothal, and the cheerful view which everyone around appeared to take of her future, as though she had no past.

Isabel, however, still seemed always to take a great interest in her friend's affairs, asked many questions about her plans and prospects, and admired the great half-hoop diamond engagement ring that glittered on her finger.

She watched Calla folding up Lusada's latest letter and putting it away in her desk.

"You keep all those treasures there, I suppose?" she observed.

"Yes," admitted Calla.

"How many of them you must be amassing! And how long is he going to stay away?"

"About all the Winter, I fancy. You see he has to 'do' Egypt tolerably thoroughly while he is about it. But we expect him back before the Spring."

"Ah, yes! Though I should not imagine," suggested Isabel, sweetly, "that he was one of the class of men whose principal part in life is to realize people's expectations?"

"No, it is not his speciality, certainly," agreed Calla, lightly; "but let us hope he will realize this one."

"And when he comes back, you'll be married, I suppose?" pursued Isabel.

"Perhaps some time in the Spring, or early Summer—that is the present plan, at least."

"And do you really think you will be happy, Calla?" Isabel asked, with seriously attentive eyes.

"I think so," the girl replied, softly and steadily. "Why not?"

"So you thought when you were going to marry Felix," observed Isabel, in smooth, gentle tones, but with an incisiveness as cutting and cruel as a stroke from the claw of a tiger's beautiful velvet paw.

Calla had always dealt tenderly and forbearingly with Isabel, had in some measure yielded to her all their lives, and was more than ever patient with her now. She could almost as easily have struck a child as have spoken a harsh or hasty word to Felix's sister now that she was in mourning for the mother who had so idolized her. So, although the colour blazed up crimson in Calla's cheek, there was neither resentment nor defiance in her tone, and if a shade of reproach for the unprovoked attack betrayed itself, it was most involun-

tarily, as she answered, lifting her head and meeting Isabel's look unflinchingly,

"Yes, I did hope once before that I might know another happiness. I hoped and prayed, I think you know how sincerely! But that hope was buried long ago, and now I have learnt to hope again."

"Yes," assented Isabel, "that is quite natural. But still 'there's many a slip 'twixt the cup and the lip.' I would not make *too* sure of this second sweet draught if I were you. It might be spilt like the first, you know—might it not?" she added, fixing her strange soft sapphire eyes, with their peculiar uncertain gleam, on Calla's face. Receiving no answer, she continued quietly—"Egypt is a long way off. Suppose he never comes back?"

"Then I must bear it as best I may," replied Calla, quietly too, but very nearly at the end of her patience. "And why do you suggest these possibilities to me, Isabel? Sufficient for the day is the evil

thereof. There are enough real troubles in life without our distressing ourselves about the imaginary ones that *may be*."

"Certainly," Isabel agreed, with unruffled serenity, "and you must not mind what I say, Calla. You know I always speak my fancies, and I had no idea that you were *nervous*. You *used* not to be."

Calla was the last girl in the world to be justly accused of nervousness. She was not, as a rule, in the least degree superstitious or fanciful; yet now she did feel a chill sense of some vague foreboding tightening at her heart. Isabel's words seemed to her ominous. She shook off the feeling, and despised it and defied it; but for all that, the cold shadow of a presentiment touched her in that hour.

Their conversation was interrupted at this point, to her relief. She could not, however, forget Isabel's strange words and manner; it seemed to her that they two could never more come together heart and

soul in the old intimacy again, and the difference was all the more marked because she began to realise that it was chiefly to *her* that Isabel was changed.

The truth was that to all others Isabel was masked and veiled in impenetrable reserve, and only to Calla revealed now and then a glimpse of her real self. In her heart it is probable that she was really fond of her girlhood's only friend and companion still; a great deal of the regard of the old friendship lingered, even if its sweetness and confidence had died out. As if she was conscious of having behaved strangely, there was a flash of that old affection in her manner to Calla as she kissed her and bade her good night that evening, and said, "Come and see me to-morrow; it is my last day in London, and I shall be all alone." But even in the kiss and the light caress at parting, there seemed to Calla to be something panther-like. Perhaps she was in a fanciful mood that day.

On the morrow she found Isabel apparently in quite another frame of mind—silent and dreamy and abstracted at first, and then seeming to come back to the world, and looking at Calla with sorrowful, earnest eyes, that seemed to seek and wonder.

"Will you come down and spend a week with me in the country when we are settled?" Isabel asked, as they discussed their mutual plans.

"Of course I will, dear," the other replied cordially; it would take more than an unkind word to shake her loyal tenderness to the old ties.

"That will be good of you," Isabel said, and for the first time Calla thought she was like her old self again, sad, but not harsh or embittered, as she continued, with a touch of the confidential tone she had dropped of late, "It won't be very cheerful for you, I know, and I am never in the same mood from one hour to another,

but I shall be glad if you will come. You will keep me awake and in real life. I am always dreaming now. Dreams haunt me all day—real things seem to glide away from me like ghosts, and leave me in a dream."

"Do you know, Calla," she added presently, "I have such a queer dream about you. Not a day-dream, you know, a real sleeping vision. I have it over and over again, and it is always the same—until last night."

"What is it, dear?" asked Calla, imprudent in her curiosity, as Eve's daughters will be.

"I see you and Julius Lusada walking together," said Isabel, leaning her head on her hand, and looking into the fire as if she saw the vision there. "Sometimes it is in one kind of landscape, sometimes in another—forest, or sea-shore, or desert—but always you two, and always behind

you, and following you wherever you turn, there is a little black imp."

"A black imp?" repeated Calla, half laughing, half curious.

"Yes," said Isabel, without the faintest smile. "I have often dreamt it, and always the same. It follows you close as your shadow, and seems to be mopping and mowing and mocking at you; and you are so unconscious of it, you and he! It is not a pleasant dream."

"No," agreed Calla, with an uncomfortable sensation chilling her interest.

"And last night it went on further," continued Isabel, in the same pensive, pondering way. "There was more of it than I could follow before the curtain came down—for it always ends in a darkness coming over it and shutting it from my sight. You were passing up the aisle of a great church to the altar, you two; you were in a white bridal dress and veil, and there was music playing, but still behind

you there crawled this horrible little black creature, and his eyes were glittering so fiendishly, like coals of fire."

Isabel paused.

"Well," said Calla, in a voice a trifle lower and less firm than usual, "and was that all?"

"No. Then it came upon me suddenly that what I had thought at first was bridal music playing was a deep bell tolling—or else it changed to that, I don't know which. And before the altar there was a coffin covered with a great black pall, and it—the creature that followed you—pulled your dress, and pointed its black finger there. And you started and clung closer to *his* arm; but you both kept on towards the altar still. There you lifted up the pall and looked down into the coffin—and I felt there was some horror coming, and I tried to call you away, to pull you back; but I could not utter a sound—I could not get at you to touch you. Then I heard

you scream—and the darkness came down upon me—and that shriek of yours seemed to be ringing louder and louder in my ears as I went down into depths of darkness—till I woke." She shivered a little, and Calla, whose hand was touching hers, felt that she was cold as ice.

"It was a nightmare," Calla said, but rather faintly, and looking very pale, as the recollection forced itself upon her, of how often she had heard Isabel gravely say that she was "a true dreamer."

She had always laughed at such ideas, but she was unaccountably influenced by Isabel now.

"What they call a nightmare perhaps. But I think dreamland is real—why should it not be? I know that many stranger things than dreamland are real. All night now my mother sits by my bedside. People would think that strange."

"It is not strange, dear, that we should dream of those we love," said Calla softly,

turning her eyes away lest they should betray her thought.

"But it is not a dream," said Isabel, shaking her head. After a silence she added suddenly, "I did not mean to tell you that, Calla. It belongs to me alone. I don't know what made me let it slip to you. I had determined to get out of the habit of telling you my thoughts. I like to keep them to myself. Please never mention what I said just now."

"No, darling, I never will," Calla said tenderly and sadly.

An hour afterwards she and Isabel said good-bye.

"Write to me," Isabel said. "I shall watch to know what that dream of mine meant, and whether it is likely to come—false."

"And you will write to me, Bell?"

"Yes, just short letters to tell you we are well—if we *are* well. And if not—ill news flies apace. But *burn* my letters,

Calla, always, if I get writing about *myself*."

So they parted, on that last day falling back into something like their old friendship again; and so from these pages Isabel passes, to be seen no more. It is not her story, but Calla's, that I am telling. Isabel's story is one that may be told hereafter, but not now, nor here.

She leaves two thorns in Calla's pillow —the one is a fear, which she breathes to no living creature, that more sorrow is in store for Felix, that the curse which overhangs the fated family of the Greys may claim another victim yet, and that he may have cause to mourn his sister's life even more deeply than his mother's death; the other is a less unselfish, a more morbid and unreasonable thought, a haunting, secret dread (of which weakness she is herself heartily ashamed), that Isabel's words to her were ominous and boded evil. She is angry with herself, being, as a rule,

singularly free from superstition, for allowing this fanciful fear to disturb her peace; but still it weighs upon her, and causes her a constant craving for news from Julius Lusada, for assurances that he is safe and well.

Yet somehow in the eagerness with which she watches for his letters—frequent and warm and true-lover's letters as they are—still she never forgets for a day to look for news of Felix, as he roves from point to point of the devastated land in whose fair sunshine they have spent so many bright and pleasant days, and round whose very heart now the ring of the armies of united Germany is tightening closer and closer. In spite of her occasional indignation with this general, or that regiment, or those authorities, Calla clings always in love and sympathy to the once sunny land of France.

Felix Grey, on the whole, is leading a less perilous life than her lively imagina-

tion pictures, and is really running no very great risk of falling by a random shot; while the chances of Julius Lusada's standing any immediate danger of being drowned in the Nile are decidedly small. Still both their positions appear precarious to Calla; and she watches uneasily day by day with divided anxiety for news of both. Perhaps the fact that she hears often from Lusada, and never *from*, and not very much *of* Felix, stimulates her anxiety about the latter. Anyhow, whenever re-assured by a high-spirited, happy, and hopeful letter from Lusada, that her fears for him are foolish and fanciful, she generally, in her after-thoughts of another, feels a sting of the old unreasonable self-reproach. The unexorcised demon will still whisper in her ear, "What right have *you* to hope to be happy?—*you* to count on a bright future?—while *he* is hopeless, sad, and alone, and bade you think of him 'always as happy' only to spare *you* pain?"

On Christmas Day, when Mr. Yorke, at dinner, called for a bumper to the health of "absent friends!" and a sympathetic smile on everybody's face showed that they mentally dedicated the toast to the successful lover who should be nameless, to spare Calla's blushes, Calla did not blush. And she stifled a much deeper sigh than was at all necessary, or called for by the occasion, as she secretly wondered how Felix was spending *his* Christmas Day, and whether melancholy memories were painfully present to him.

Felix was, as it happened, sitting down to a sufficiently good dinner, with a couple of kindred souls, fellow-correspondents and compatriots, at a restaurant in Versailles, quite safe and comfortable, and out of reach of shot and shell. Outside the walls of Paris, a dinner, if you liked to pay for it, was quite a possibility, and there was not the slightest need to fatten the Christmas cat.

The New Year came—that year which dawned so tragically upon France in her hopeless struggle, dashing the vain waves of her divided forces against the rock-like power of the enemy, relentless in their unity, resistless in the alliance of their concentrated strength—that year whose birth so many thousands welcomed with awful anxiety as to what changes might hap before it had run its course. It dawned on Felix, who was off on a literary foraging expedition, very cold and rather hungry, taking notes in a battered pocket-book, in a sequestered corner uncomfortably near the shells of Mont Valérien, but well satisfied with himself for having contrived to edge himself so far as where the foot of correspondents rarely trod.

It dawned on Julius Lusada, enjoying a social quartette with three bachelor friends on the deck of a dahabiah off Thebes, under the great Oriental stars that gleamed as large as moons through

the palm-trees. It dawned on Calla, alone in her room, standing on a chair and wrestling somewhat impatiently with the rusty hasp at the top of the high half-window, which only consented to creak back on its hinge as Big Ben boomed out the last stroke of midnight. Then she leant out upon the sill, regardless of the icy night-air, and listened to the bells that seemed, all over the great silent city, to clash out together at once in a wild glad peal of welcome—and looked up at the cold bright twinkling stars, that on the Nile were beaming down so large and mellow and lustrous—and thought of both the absent ones.

She was all alone—her father was out at a merrymaking; her aunt had been an hour in bed and asleep. She leant there lost in thought, listening to the voices of a company of carol-singers dying away in the distance along the street below. How sweet it sounded, yet how sadly the last

notes died away. She felt an undefinable sense of loneliness and foreboding weigh upon her as she welcomed this new year alone.

The old year that was gone had found her regretful, mourning "a fair hope dead," but not despairing blindly over its grave. It had brought her new comfort, new hope, new love, this good old year. What if it had brought back to her too the resurrection of the past?—what even though it left her now a prey to sad and strange unrest? It had given her good gifts, and she sorrowed to see it go. What gifts did this new-born year bear for her?—how would it leave her when it too had run its course?

If all went well, and all their hopes were realized, on next New Year's Eve she should watch this now opening year die out among the unknown glories of tropical moonlight, and from the lotos-eating languor of the South Sea Islands,

"Where a life is love, and love is a dream,"

with beauty hitherto undreamt of around her, resting in the earthly paradise of love and delight that he who would lead her through its gates had pictured forth to her so many times, she would look back to a past that should pale and wane in the light of that present as those cold distant stars beside a tropical moon.

This was Calla's castle in the air, built up on Julius Lusada's plan of architecture. Would the coming year realize it? Would she be able so entirely to leave her past behind, and in a new hemisphere lead a new life?

She sighed as she looked back through the changing seasons of the dead old year, and looking up at the chill bright wintry sky, she prayed that the New Year might bring her lover back safe to her side, and guard and shield from all harm her brother and her friend, wherever his path might lie.

CHAPTER X.

"COME VEDI, ANCOR NON M'ABBANDONA!"

WHEN the year was barely two months old, one of the prayers which Calla had offered on its shrine in its opening hour was fulfilled; one dim fear which had clouded her welcome of it was annihilated. Julius Lusada, having finished his tour with a rapid run through the Holy Land, came back to London, safe, sound, and prosperous. He took care that his return should not fall upon his beloved as an unexpected blessing; he appeared to have a habit of heralding his arrival by telegrams from each and all of the last few stages of his journey—a manifestation of affection and eagerness which was certainly

flattering, although a trifle agitating to the nerves. Calla used to tear open the flimsy yellow envelopes with a flutter of anxiety, to be relieved with some such message as, "Detained at Southampton, come on by 12.30 train."

Even to the very hour of his arrival, she watched and waited for him with a certain sense of insecurity, unable to banish from her mind Isabel's warning words, and the old adage anent the cup and lip—unable altogether to shake herself free from fancies that a malignant fate might yet hurl the train by which he travelled to destruction, or precipitate his hansom cab into collision with a Pickford's van or a block on London Bridge. But Fate did none of these things; and when he had returned to her, and his voice called her by name again, all her shadowy presentiments vanished away into thin air.

There was small doubt that Lusada had been enjoying his pleasure-trip heartily, in

spite of his being absent from his betrothed; but there was absolutely no shadow of room for doubt as to his delight in seeing her again.

The joy of a meeting is scarcely ever in the actual moment of re-union; that moment of transition from suspense to welcome strikes too suddenly and sharply for pure joy. The sudden exaltation from the vigilant anxiety that weighs upon you like pain, to the pinnacle of attainment, makes you dizzy. It is when that vertigo of the moment is past, and we steady ourselves on the great height of our joy, that we realize its perfection.

So not until she and Lusada sat side by side in the silence that succeeds the incoherence of meeting, did Calla fully realize the intense relief and joy of this union.

If during his absence, in spite of all her late anxiety for his return, his influence over her had sometimes seemed to lose its strength, in his presence it returned with

undiminished force, and cast the old spell over her, body and soul, again.

It was a curious difference in Calla's feelings towards those two men whom she had loved, that in Julius Lusada's absence the glamour he had cast over her often faded somewhat, and in his presence re-asserted itself, powerful as ever; whereas Felix Grey, in absence and presence alike, held ever the same influence over her; and she referred in thought to his probable opinion when he was far away, as simply and naturally as she would have consulted him were he by her side. It was probable that to the end of her life she would as loyally defer to every opinion of Felix's as obey every wish of Lusada's.

But if during the absence of both her spirit has turned often to Felix—calmly, dreamily, with a vague inexplicable instinct of affinity—now when Lusada returns to her, and with all the love and joy of re-union shining in his glad smile, seeks a

response so triumphantly and confidently from her, he meets that full response which he desires. Her colour comes and goes as rapidly, her lips quiver into as lovely and half tremulous a smile, as if his sway had ever been supreme.

A great deal of the seeming inconstancy and fickleness in this world, if its history were truly traced, would be discovered to spring only from the root of a morbid fidelity that lies so deep that surface passions and emotions come and go without ever striking down to it. The offspring of this too often disastrous constancy bear frequently the form of fickle fancy or wandering caprice. True, it was not in this case such a mere passing fancy which attached Calla to her second love; but none the less was hers, through her very fidelity, a divided faith. Between this love and its predecessor, there was ever an unseen, unknown, and often even unconscious strife—the conflict between the inner life,

where the past exists as the present and a possible future lives as an idealized past, and the external life that lives in contact with the material world, that demands in its healthy and buoyant youth to breathe the earthly air of hope and joy, and cannot exist in the rarefied atmosphere of memories and ideals. This strife between soul and temperament has many fields of fight; its unseen struggle rends many an unknown human heart, makes or mars many an obscure life; it is the secret of many a flash of the genius that from such conflict bursts into flame and shines a beacon light; more than this, it holds the balanced forces of the whole world eternally swaying and struggling in the battle between the spiritual and the material.

The same conflict that fills that vast field is taking place on a small scale in a thousand separate hearts. It holds Calla's in a state of chronic division, of which, however, she is at this hour uncon-

scious, while rejoicing in the return of the lover who represents to her the present and the future, and all the external world.

His noble figure and face strike her anew, as would the contemplation of a splendid piece of sculpture or painting. She gazes at him with a mingling of pride and happiness, with a sweet tremulous shyness that would draw her to avert her look from him, but that the still stronger force of his influence compels her eyes to answer his. And he gazes at her with that unutterably tender smile which ever to *her* softens the stern outline of his features, with a slow colour rising in his sunburnt cheek, as if from the beautiful, blushing, speaking face his eyes were drinking their first and last deep draught of beauty.

"And now, what fellows have you been flirting with since I have been away?" he asks, half abruptly.

"Why, none. I am not a flirt," she says, with a soft smile.

"Don't look so lovely while you tell me so, or I can't believe it. Yet tell me so again, for it's sweet to hear."

"Well, how am I to tell you without looking at you?" she says, laughing and blushing.

He finds that difficulty easy enough to solve. He draws her to his side, so that her cheek rests against his shoulder, and her downcast face is hidden from his view. "Now tell me," he says, "that, while I have been out of sight, I have not been out of mind?"

"My letters told you that; and rung a great many changes on the assurance, too."

"And you really have not let any fellows come making love to you?"

"No. Why *will* you think I have? It's not my way at all."

"Seems so odd they can keep away," he observes, meditatively. "*I* couldn't. One would think they would at least try their luck, even if they couldn't go in and win."

"Others have better taste, you see."

"Or cooler heads."

"Now I don't ask whom *you* have been flirting with," she observes, a little interrogatively.

"Nobody you would care to hear about," he replies carelessly.

"Then you *have* been flirting?"

He appears in no way annoyed by the inference—indeed a smile that seems even more of gladness than amusement overspreads his face.

"Little girls should not be jealous," he observes brightly.

"I am not," she replies, softly and confidingly, raising her eyes to his.

It is rather cruel of her to take away from him the satisfaction he appeared singularly enough to derive from the possi-

bility of her jealousy. But even if the disappointment had been greater it would have been more than compensated by her tenderly trusting look and tone. His half amused smile melts into a graver gentleness.

"No, you need never be. My lily, my pure little darling, whom should I ever find like *you?*"

People seem to have a wonderful inclination for likening Calla to a lily. It is an apt simile enough, inasmuch as she is tall and of a clear white complexion and graceful presence; and about her too there is the charm of a certain frank purity. But it would seem that in her general nature and character and expression she is much more like a rose—a warm white Summer rose, in the fulness of its fragrant bloom, with the deep soft flush at its creamy heart. There is a Southern softness about her that does not seem to belong to the cold, white, marble-leaved lily.

She is happy and light of heart this day in his return. In his presence morbid fancies fly. His strength has that magnetic and sympathetic quality that communicates itself to others. Near to that steady strength, of which every pulse beats full of exuberant life and power, Calla feels far away from all misfortune. She has a sense of safety and shelter by his side; she forgets, as utterly as if they had never been, her fanciful fears and forebodings; they are sponged out of her mind and effaced, like words rubbed off a slate, to-day.

Meanwhile, at this time of their reunion, while they for the hour are forgetful of all the world besides, across the Channel stirring scenes are passing—the city of Paris, which has stood so long at bay, has fallen at last.

In the Place de la Concorde, on that first of March, the morning sun glinted on the ranks of the Prussian bayonets, bright

and unstained, as they marched through the conquered city. The conquerors were merciful, however, and in two days they turned their backs on silent, fallen, vanquished Paris, and tossed their helmets in the air with shouts of rejoicing as they set their faces toward the Fatherland.

The tide that poured into Paris when the gates were opened bore Felix Grey with it. But the back-wave, when the Germans retreated, left him there. He intended to remain until he had explored every nook and corner of the lately-besieged city, that knew not then how soon it was to undergo a yet more tragical siege. When the first blows of the Commune were struck—and in the murder of the veteran Generals Lecomte and Thomas the first drops of the storm-cloud that was descending dark and bloody over Paris fell, and men read too truly the omens in their fall —Felix Grey refused to take the warning

that others were taking, and to leave Paris, as almost all who could do so were leaving it.

In writing to the Yorkes, he said that he had cast his lot in with that unhappy city, and should stay and "see it through." That there was a dark and terrible time coming, he had no manner of doubt; but still he hoped that the storm would clear the sky, and that from the bloodshed would be born Liberty and Peace, as they had been born in travail and in storm ere now.

"Ah! he thinks," said Calla, with a sad smile, "that his ideal Communism—that Utopia he is always dreaming of—is the Communism of the Paris mob!"

"Instead of leaving it alone," said Mr. Yorke, "he will want to be putting his shoulder to the gigantic wheels, to help to push it uphill to his ideal. And the Juggernaut car is rolling downhill as fast as it can."

"And those who try to oppose its downward movement will only get crushed beneath it," observed Mrs. King.

A light flush mounted to Calla's cheek, and she lifted her head as if to speak impulsively. But she checked herself, seemed abstracted a moment, and then said, gently and gravely, with a look on her face resembling Felix's own faithful, trustful expression,

"I would rather see him struggle to raise it than run out of the way. Felix would not *be* Felix, if he knew what fear for his own safety was."

CHAPTER XI.

"SHE IS MY TRUE-LOVE TRULY WON."

THE time drew near when Lusada was to claim his bride. The merry month of May (and a fitful, capricious, whimsical maid in our climate that same fair May generally is!) entered into the land; and before she departed, during the last days of her declining reign, the wedding was to take place. The superstition as to marrying in May had at first been forgotten by all the parties concerned; and when they recollected it they only smiled, and agreed to set it at defiance.

Tom Yorke is happy, and glad now to trust his daughter to Lusada's care; for he has grown fond and proud of his son-

in-law elect, although a son-in-law of such wandering tastes (of whom it may safely be predicted that he will never be known to pass twelve consecutive months under the same roof) may not be altogether a model of what most parents would desire. But Yorke is a wanderer himself, and having known Julius Lusada a year, he feels no misgivings whatsoever.

Mrs. King, who loves Calla as a daughter, is content, just barely content, but not overflowingly delighted, with her niece's prospects. She is too discreet ever to utter a word of doubt, and is always in harmony with the occasion; but she does think in her heart that a man who would take a house and furnish it, and settle down to live on his income, or even a man of quiet domestic literary tastes, like "poor Felix!" would be a more desirable *parti* than this brilliant and successful adventurer, in spite of his twelve months' constancy, which does not appear

to Mrs. King such a marvellous proof of devotion as it does to the lover himself.

As for Lusada, it is simply a truth that he has never been so faithful and devoted to any woman in his life as he is now, and has been ever since he loved her first, to Calla. Who shall solve the mystery of love, or define what manner of woman will win *this* man's heart, and at what man's feet *that* woman will yield up her life?

As the wedding-day draws nearer, and he begins to feel sure and certain of winning his prize (although still he has too much experience to feel sure of any cup reaching his lips till it has already reached them), he asserts his right to her with a more open and avowed air of proprietorship—he claims her love, demands responsive caresses from her, with a kind of tyrannic tenderness. And she freely gives the response he claims, for she does love him, and feels a delicious dependence on his strength, a subjection to his plans

and wishes far sweeter than empire over them. Yet her soul still now and again turns unquietly and longingly towards that "soul twin-born with hers," from whom she is for ever parted, turns not so much now in love as in a longing to know—what of him?—how is he? For lately there has come no news of Felix Grey, either in newspaper or by letter; and they wonder how he is faring in the stricken city, where brothers war with brothers, and the son's hand is at the father's throat.

It is the day before that fixed for the bridal, which is to be a quiet one. Calla is in her room, in the centre of a confusion of millinery, which she is endeavouring to reduce to order, and arrange, preliminary to packing it in the brand-new boxes that are ranged along the wall. She is singing softly to herself, as her pleased eyes rest upon the folds of shining silk, the filmy laces, and the transparent gossamery fabrics. She takes a true woman's delight

in the apparelling of her beauty now; that deep delight in it came to her only with love, but did not die with love's first blight; it lives stronger than ever in her now, in her second sunshine of love and hope and joy.

The servant announces that Mr. Lusada is below, and wishes to speak to her. A quick bright blush mounts to Calla's cheek; she springs hastily up, dropping the white muslin dress she was shaking and folding, and flings it carelessly on a heap of its gay-coloured comrades, as she turns to the mirror. She is in a hurry, but she has time to pass a comb over her hair, and smoothe back a stray tress, and tie the locket he gave her round her neck, with a coy smile at the pretty image that smiles back at her. Then she runs lightly down-stairs, light of foot and heart, with a soft sparkle of pleasure in her eyes, and the lovely colour that had flushed up at his arrival still mantling in her cheek.

Lusada smiles as he greets her, but it is with a grave and somewhat constrained smile, and he keeps her hand in his as he looks at her earnestly.

"What is the matter?" asks Calla, standing still, all the brightness suddenly fading out of her face.

"Nothing is the matter, dear."

"Something is wrong," she answers positively—"something troubles you."

"Something did trouble me," he replies —"the doubt whether I should or should not show you a letter I've had. But I have made up my mind; it is right that you should see it."

"A letter!—From Felix?" Her woman's instinct leaps instantly to that conclusion.

His face falls a little, and that additional cloud on his brow tells her not only that she has guessed right, but that her so rapidly guessing right causes him a pang more of sorrow than of anger.

"I have brought it for you to read," he

says quietly. He takes a letter from his pocket, and as he gives it to her, he notices her paleness, and adds quickly—"Don't look so scared, dear; nothing to frighten you; read, see."

She sees, as he unfolds the letter, that the writing—Felix's well-known clear hand—is tremulous and less clear than usual. What Felix says is this:—

"DEAR OLD FELLOW,

"If you have been wondering at my silence, here comes its explanation. On one of my rambles through Belleville, I was struck by a shell a few weeks ago, and have not been able to move. I am better now, but have been bad; am still lame, unable to stand. I am with the Lemoinnes—Calla will remember them—Angélique and Jeannette, of the mill at La Basse-Rive. They are ardent Communists—Jacques, the husband, a worshipper of Delescluze. They are very

good to me, but the horrors of this fratricidal siege do not conduce to the peace of mind likely to lead to strength of body.

"When the Versailles troops enter, I fear there will be worse work than ever. I am not able to move from this quarter, and if I could, I would not run away from these poor kind souls who have nursed me while I lay helpless. Fate has cast my lot in with them without choice of mine. If we weather the storm, you and I may recall old happy days together yet. If not—well, old friend, the separation will only be a longer one by more or less years. Are you married yet? If so, give your wife an old friend's love and heartiest good wishes. She will be safe—happy—with you. I am tired now, so good-bye. You will hear from me when these coming days are over, if things do not go ill with me.

"How history repeats itself! God help

these poor creatures—all—all—in the time that is coming upon them!

"Yours ever,

"FELIX GREY."

The last few lines were more tremulously written than the rest, and straggled wanderingly over the page with a sad suggestiveness.

There was not so much to alarm them in this letter; but she read it, as he had read it, by the light of the later news, of the telegrams that told him how the Versailles troops were entering Paris, and the days of bloodshed had come. They knew that the furies were let loose, and the spirit of murder was abroad there; and something of involuntary foreboding in the tone of the letter struck them both. And the simple words, that betrayed his never-dying thought for her, pierced Calla's heart like a mortal stab. She was white as death when she had read it through.

"Wounded! Alone! In a Communist house—in Belleville! And the troops are pressing on through Paris even now!" she said under her breath, and brokenly, as if the words fell unconsciously from her lips. She had not looked at Lusada; her eyes, full of desperate dismay as they rose from the letter, did not seek his face.

"Calla?" he said. The tone was of inquiry. What had he to inquire? *She* had nothing to say—nothing to answer. The thought that Felix was in danger filled her mind, and for the moment shut out all other thoughts, all other feelings, all other fears.

"Wounded, helpless, and alone!" she repeated with a shudder, and a catching of the breath like a sob.

"Look at me, Calla," he said, seizing both her hands in his with an abruptness not usual in his manner to her. She looked up obediently, with a sort of vague, piteous pleading in her eyes. "Do not be angry

with me!" those large, lovely eyes said. But they did not say, "Your love can comfort me for all besides."

He held her two hands close and fast, and watched her face with intent earnestness as he said,

"If you will it so, Calla, to-morrow—on the day that should have been our wedding-day—I will be by Felix's side! I have friends in Versailles—I have friends in Paris. No harm is likely to come to Felix if I am with him. Say—shall I go?"

She had started as he spoke; she looked at him now with a strange new flash of light and passion in her eyes; her lips parted as if to speak, yet rested silent, as if struck statue-still and dumb before they they could find utterance. He waited for her to answer, but she answered never a word—only gazed at him with that strange, sudden glory illuminating her face, rapt as if in adoration. He read her silence aright.

"I will go, Calla—I will go to-night," he said quietly, and very tenderly.

She drew a long, shuddering breath, and her lips quivered. She tore her hands from his clasp so suddenly that it seemed for a second as if her impulse was to push him away from her. But she freed her hands only to fling her arms around his neck, to throw herself upon his breast, to look full into his eyes with that rapt gaze of passionate pride and love intensified.

He could never forget those eyes of hers, in the full glory of that look which they had never worn till now; he could never forget her voice when she found utterance at last.

"You—*you!*" she whispered, in melting, thrilling, trembling tones, that shot fire and lightning through his veins when poured into his ears in the voice he loved so well. "You go to him? My hero!—my noblest, bravest! *Go* then. Yes, go to him. Take *all* my heart, all my soul

with you, my love, my love! Go to him; it is what he would have done for you!"

"I know it. I will go!" he said, clasping her impetuously closer in his arms. "Could I have stayed content in my own love and my own joy, and left my truest friend in danger and alone, I should not be worthy of the love for which I would sell my soul."

"You need not sell your soul for the love that is yours—your own for ever now. Leave me—go to *him*. But oh, my darling, take care, take care of yourself. For all our sakes, guard yourself well. Julius, I love you—I *love* you! Guard yourself safe, and come back safe to *me!*"

They had been plighted lovers for twelve months now, but she had never said to him "I love you" with such a passionate cry of truth before.

"Do not fear for me. If you knew, my darling, how many storms I have weathered, you would waste no anxiety on me in

this matter. Now see, sweetest, you must not fret or fear. Either by force with the troops, by money, or by the help of friends, I will get into the Belleville quarter. And when once I am there, let me only find Felix (and you see I have the clue where to seek him), and I take him in my care. Down in the cellars if shells are flying; to the ambulance if he is badly hurt; with the troops if they will protect us; out of Paris by begged, borrowed, bought, or stolen means! Ah! trust to me! I will bring Felix through if mortal man may. And safely when I come back to you, *then*, dearest, *then?*"

"Then you shall never, never know one moment's care that I can suffer for you or save you from—never a moment's doubt that you are all the world to me!"

CHAPTER XII.

"FOR HE WAS STRONG IN THE LAND OF THE DEAD."

BY the time that Julius Lusada arrived in Paris, the sky over the city was red as blood with the lurid light of fire, and blotted with the black smoke coiling up from the blazing palaces. The enraged troops were pouring through the streets, their death-dealing columns converging from all sides towards the eastern quarter of the city; the insurgents, desperate in this their last struggle, were fighting barricade after barricade.

Paris was writhing like a scorpion in its circle of fire, and driving its burning fangs into its own heart.

Wherever the eye turned the fierce tongues of flame were darting skywards. The temples of law and luxury, of state and church and pleasure, were engulfed alike in the spreading devastation. The Hôtel de Ville was a living furnace; the Théâtre Lyrique and the Porte St. Martin were glowing pillars of flame; from the Palais de Justice, and from the Ministry of Finance, the fire leaped and roared exultant; the cupola'd roof had crashed down into the burning wreck that was the Tuileries a little while ago. Still amongst the general destruction, while ruin reigned in the beautiful Place de la Concorde—how strange a misnomer it sounds when thought of in connection with those days! —while round the Palais Royal the eager flames licked longingly, while on and under the barricade that cut across the Rue de Rivoli the corpses lay as they had fallen—still the towers of Notre Dame stood tall and unshaken; still the Arc de Triomphe look-

ed down the Champs Elysées, untouched in its solitary state.

From the curling waves of flame a thick black smoke was borne up on the northward wind, and brooded like a pall over the city where Death was holding red carnival that day.

The reign of terror had taken possession again for a brief season of its long-deserted throne. Even where there was not battle there was slaughter. To be accused was to be convicted, and carried to summary execution; the revenge on murder plunged madly into murder itself, and with red hands wreaked its retribution, so that even to be suspected was to be shot down like a dog, dragged to a dog's grave.

"Looking for a friend who is lying wounded over in Belleville?" said one who knew Paris and the Parisians well, to Lusada. "You are mad. Turn back while you may. No man's life is safe for an hour."

Julius Lusada smiled, and went on his way. The more difficult the adventure, the more honour to accomplish it, and that he would successfully achieve what he intended to do, he never for a moment had a doubt. Having once embarked on an enterprise, to relinquish it and turn back was to his nature a simple impossibility.

The very danger was to him like the lamp to the moth. The thirst of adventure, the enjoyment of risk and hazard, that had swayed his youth and given the bent to his whole life, possessed him now. The atmosphere of war and blood and fire and murder intoxicated him like wine! The rattle of the musketry was to him as the bugle to the old war-horse; the lurid red in the sky, and the fierce tongues of flame that darted up from the burning ruins, thrilled him with the passion of peril, the delight of daring!

Fear was a quality absolutely unknown to him. He did not comprehend it. The

meaning of the words "safe" and "dangerous," as regarded himself, were like some foreign language to him. If he thought of danger at all, it was only to reflect calmly that he would die when his time came, and could no more retard the written hour of death by shirking, than hasten it by daring, danger. He was steady and cool as if lounging in a drawing-room, as confident in the successful termination of his enterprise as if no obstacles had lain in his way; and through the burning streets and the bloody scenes that made Paris a terror to the civilized world, while barricade after barricade was falling, and men and women were fighting like wild beasts, and like wild beasts cut down, while the troops were surging on like avenging furies, he pressed forward calmly and collectedly to the goal he had set himself.

In a small room on the *rez-de-chaussée* of the house that was his shelter, Felix Grey

was lying alone—alone with the exception of a little girl, who sat nursing a battered doll on the floor. This was "la petite Jeannine," of the Mill, near La Basse-Rive, the pretty child whom Calla and Isabel had petted "in the happy time."

No one else was in the room, no one else, so far as Felix knew, in the house. The family who had filled the house that morning were all gone—Jacques and Louis were fighting on the barricades; Angélique had followed them, to fight or nurse, to hurt or heal, who shall say? Jeannette had waited awhile, but she too, once the fair, healthy mistress of the Mill, had become the very creature of the Revolution now. The Revolution called on all its children, and Jeannette was drawn to obey the call that came in fire and shot. She too had gone. Felix and the child were left alone.

He lay there listening, fretting himself into a worse fever than had laid its hot

hold on him already, longing to arise and go forth and see. He knew that he was safer there; but he would have bartered all assurances of safety for an hour's use of his disabled limbs. Tied to his couch, helpless, passive, whilst around him History was enacting! The very women had flown into the vortex of the danger and the turmoil, and he lay there, crushed down by mortal illness, but suffering more just now from the sense of loneliness and helplessness than from any physical pain.

Yet it had been a hard time he had had to go through since the shattering shell had struck him senseless; sharp suffering and semi-starvation, fever whose vanishing illusions, and sleep whose half-delirious dreams had rendered the waking hours of utter unrest more weary. How often in those lonely hours, when he was lost to all consciousness of where he was or what ailed him, the shadowy image of a girl tall

and white as a lily, with coils of midnight hair,

"Making her doubly fair thus darkly set,"

had grown out of the darkness and glided to his side! How often in the moan of the night-wind he had heard her voice whisper the old sweet words, and in the midnight silence listened with strained ears to the delusive sound of the soft rustle of her dress sweeping nearer—nearer—lain with closed eyes, deeming that she was bending over him and her breath stirred his hair, dreading to open his eyes lest the sense of that soothing presence should vanish.

Although her ghostly image seemed impalpable, and always evaded him when he sought to seize the white hand he used to see gleaming faintly through the shadows, yet those hours when she so haunted the dreary little room, bore a balm to him that seemed to cool the fever. But there were other times when for hours and hours of

burning unrest, he lived over those few moments on the deck of the Dover boat, and wasted his soul in the vain craving of that last look again—saw her for ever fading from his sight, saw the green waves wash in between them, saw the gulf for ever widening, and far in the dimmest distance saw the last glimpse of her face lingering and lost, as the last light of the vanished sunset lingers and is lost from off the furthest wave.

Now, however, these illusions one and all had died away. With clear and cruel consciousness of gnawing pain and sinking strength, of the awful loneliness in which he lay helpless in this distracted land of horrors crueller than war, so far from help or home, he waited—watched with a curious calmness the slow symptoms he knew meant mortal danger creep through every limb—watched with the eager interest that weakness dimmed, but could not destroy, to hear what chapter of

history was writing itself in the very life-blood of Paris's rent heart this day. Life had little personally left for him now. As one taken out of himself, and only tied to his physical frame by a sense of suffering, he listened and wondered, and craved to be once more, if only for an hour, the man he had been, who could have stood in the front, and sought the fight, and dared the utmost dangers of those terrible days.

"What would this day's work be?" he thought.

The child who with him was left alone in the rooms, was restless and fretful. "Where was maman?" she kept asking. "Why did not maman return?" She would run out to the front-door in spite of Felix's warning cry,

"Jeannine! come back then; there is always danger in the street. Did I not promise thy mother to keep thee here? But tell me, then, Jeannine," as she came

back to his side, "is the street quiet?—what did you hear or see?"

"There is a woman who is crying, and there are men talking; and there is always the noise *là-bas*."

"There will be more women who cry before it is done," muttered Felix. "Is not the noise coming nearer?"

The noise to which they listened was the confusion of outcries and the reverberation of musketry at the barricades. Louder and louder, and clearer and clearer, the echoes reached them; shouts of triumph, deep savage cries of despair, volley after volley of shot, now and then a piercing scream in a woman's voice. Little Jeannine got frightened and first clung to Felix's hand, and then burst into tears, and crying out, "Where is maman?" rushed away from him towards the street-door. Felix called to her to come back in vain. Presently he heard her speak to

somebody, crying in a frightened childish voice,

"Who are you?—you are not come to kill us?"

Then he heard an answer given to the child—only a few words, a half-laugh; but at that tone Felix started. That footstep too! surely it sounded like one that he should know among a thousand!

"Jeannine!" he called, in a voice to which sudden excitement lent a momentary delusive ring of strength, "qui est là?"

"Aha! I have found you then!" said a well-known accent as Julius Lusada swung the door back and entered the room, "Here I am, old fellow! how goes it with you?" he continued, grasping Felix's thin weak hand in his strong and steady clasp.

The two friends looked upon each other again, the contrast between them more vivid and startling now than ever. Lusada was in the full exuberance of exultant strength and conscious triumph over difficulties,

with the old gleam of conquest and self-confident power in his eye. Felix was worn to the mere spectre of himself; starvation and suffering had wasted him nearly to a skeleton; there were the purple shadows that forebode so fatally hollowing his temples; and his eyes looked unnaturally large and dark from the pale and sunken face as they stared up in amazed recognition.

"You here, Lusada? *you!*" he gasped breathlessly, half incredulous of his senses, notwithstanding the warm and solid hand that held his and proved its owner no ghost. Then with a sudden terror of sharp anxiety, he added, "Calla is not in Paris?"

"Calla? no! do you think I'd bring *her* into this hell of fire and murder?"

"But you—how came *you* here?"

"Why, I've just come to get you out of this."

"For me! Lusada—too generous!" said Felix, painfully. "But leave me—all is

danger *here*—keep yourself safe; *you* have a future. My life is too far gone—to be worth saving."

"You are worth a dozen dead men yet," said Lusada, stoutly. "We have got to effect a move to some safer quarter, and then to nurse you round to strength again. That's the plan."

"And you—have risked your life like this for me?"

"Little risk enough. Besides, old fellow, when was danger a word in our dictionary, when we went prospecting together down the Pacific coast? It's not a word that has any place ever between you and me."

"How did you get here?"

"Crossed the barricade with the troops. It takes me back to the old days to smell powder again."

That brief allusion to "the old days" bore Felix back to them with a startling suddenness. They flashed before him vivid as the present hour. He looked at Lusada,

and saw him even as he used to be then, and half fancied they must be back together in the old wild life of the Western hemisphere, and that all since then must have been a dream.

Just as he had looked in those old days —when life as now was at stake, and when his soul was stirred by the flash of steel and crash of shot—Lusada looked now, the light of battle in his eye, the flush of confident power on his face, the wind-blown hair pushed roughly off his brow, the clouded steel of the pistol he had hastily thrust away gleaming half-hidden in his breast. Just so Felix had seen him stand in the scarlet light of a southern sunrise, when an alarm had been given, and the men started up and turned to him to wait their leader's word.

As on the vision of a drowning man they say the pictures of the past blaze forth, so in Felix's mind—misty and half dazed with past feverish illusions, shadow-

ed by a forecast of the great darkness that was looming near,—for one moment this picture flamed out, vivid as the last leap of the sinking fires, then faded, and faded away. The four walls of the little room closed round him again; he knew the perils that circled them there.

"You crossed the barricade?" he said. "The troops will be down this street then. Where are they—all—who left me this morning?"

"Who left you? where are they?"

"At the barricades. They are gone—all but the child——"

"We had best stay here till the streets are quiet," observed Lusada, practically, considering his plan. "Then we'll make a move by the shortest cut, out of all this —as far away as you have strength to keep up."

This last clause was a necessary one, for Felix, the transient strength of excitement past, had fallen back, looking more

like death than life. Lusada however felt no sinking of doubt. Even from the strange and deepening shadow on his friend's face he did not forebode the worst.

He had seen many a sorely-stricken comrade rally and revive. He had no fear lest the fortune that had favoured him so far should desert him before the end. He had come through danger to find Felix, and had come in safety and success. He would return through danger bearing Felix with him, safe and successful still, he did not doubt. It was not the first time he had hazarded himself to drag a wounded fellow-soldier out of the fray; and the goddess of Fortune had always smiled on such of his efforts.

He quietly took command of things in general; soothed Jeannine; sent her for cold water; opened the window of the close little room; took a flask of brandy from his pocket, and revived Felix's exhausted strength therewith, though only

to a feeble flicker—the utmost of which it was now susceptible.

Presently the sound of a bullet near at hand cut the air.

"That shot came from *this* house," said Felix, raising himself on his pillow with a start.

"No; I think not," rejoined Lusada, bending an attentive ear to listen.

"Lefèvre—upstairs!" said Felix faintly, pointing. "He is mad! If he is firing on the troops, all in this house are lost!"

"I'll see," said the other promptly, his hand instinctively moving to the pistol he carried.

He went to the front-door to take a look round and note the aspect of things —to see whence the shot had come, if it had hit any living mark, and whether there were soldiers in sight. As he stepped across the threshold, another bullet cut the air from the window of a house opposite, and he saw that these were

the welcomes given to a detachment of the troops that were just turning into the street.

He stood there calm and confident, in all the strength of his splendid manhood, fearless as though these whizzing bullets had been but sugar-plums flung by a child, triumphant in the accomplishment of his enterprise, never doubting that all would go well, not rashly flinging himself forward into the thick of the peril, but just casting one cool and practical look of survey round.

He had but time given him for that one look—the old Indian squaw long ago had read his fate aright! Even in that instant, before he could balance in his mind whether to step forward or back, there came the crash of musketry. Bullets rained from the windows on the advancing soldiers; a rattling hail of lead from the soldiers swept the street. And one bullet was billeted with Julius Lusada's name, and—

whether sent his way by aim or accident—struck him straight to the heart.

Life had smiled upon him, and Fortune had of late made him her favourite.

Death was as kind as they; she smote him sudden as a thunderbolt, snatched him to her arms in the full splendour of his strength, leaving him no time for prayer or pain, for parting message or farewell word, for thought to realise that his enterprise had failed. For only one moment he reeled against the wall. Then down on the noonday of that glowing life a merciful darkness closed at once. He fell dead across the threshold of the house without a word or a cry, his fate unknown to the man for whose sake he had hazarded his life, and lost!

Felix lay and listened. He heard the volleys of musketry, the outcries in the street. He heard dimly amongst the noises a sound like a heavy fall, but heard no groan, no voice he knew. Yet that fall—it sounded

near at hand. Little Jeannine was crouched trembling by his side. He grasped the child's hand, and raised himself on his pillow and held his breath to listen. He called his friend. Still no sound of Lusada's voice. Lusada would never have left him! Why did he not answer or return? What was that fall?

With a supreme and violent effort—an effort which to save his own life he could scarcely have made—Felix flung himself off his couch. He could not stand, but he dragged himself along by the floor and the wall. As he gained the passage, the soldiers streamed in over the body of Julius Lusada which lay on the threshold. Felix spoke no word to them, took no more notice of them than if they had been men of wood; he only struggled with the last effort of his ebbing strength to where Lusada lay, and fell by his side, and felt with trembling and fainting hand if there yet remained a quiver of life in the pulseless

heart that but now had beat so brave and true.

Jacques and Louis never came back from the barricades. Jeannette was never seen nor heard of more. Of all those who had left the house that morning but one returned. Only Angélique came back to find that Death had set his red cross of possession on the door. The only life left in the house was the child Jeannine, cowering, trembling in the corner, where she had crept and hidden for safety.

Upon the threshold lay the bodies of two men, one a stranger, whose face yet Angélique had once seen before in the happy and half forgotten days of La Basse-Rive, dead and cold, shot through the heart—the other with his arm flung across the stranger's breast. And when Angélique raised his head and turned the hidden face to the light, she knew that it was Felix

Grey, and that the last lingering spark of life was extinct.

So these two trusty comrades, who had fought the same battles, and loved the same woman, true friends and generous rivals to the last,

"In their death were not divided!"

CHAPTER XIII.

"NOT ALL UNHAPPY, HAVING LOVED GOD'S BEST."

THE days go by, and each day seems a month to Calla as she waits for news. Slow morning creeps by after wakeful night, and weary afternoon draws on to anxious evening. Her heart leaps into her throat at every postman's knock; every ring at the bell takes her breath away; she passes all her days in watching at the window—watching for the first glimpse of Julius Lusada's figure turning into sight, or for the messenger or the letter that he will surely send soon.

She grows in a few days so white and wan with anxiety that they insist upon her leaving the house for daily walks; it takes

all the power of their influence to tear her from that perpetual watching at the window, and fairly force her into the open air. Yet they are strangely reluctant to utter a harsh word to her now. As days pass on they are more and more gentle to her; they utter no reproach, ask no question, hurt her by no speculation; they do not know why they treat her so tenderly, for there is no reason yet why all should not go well. Still they look upon her with an anxious forecast of compassion, as though they saw the glittering sword hung close over her head, and watched each moment for the blow to fall.

One day her father persuades her out for a stroll with him; and when fresh air and exercise have brought a little transient colour to her pale cheeks, he is satisfied, and proceeds alone on his way to the City, and allows her to return home, whither she hastens as fast as her feet can carry her. For may not the postman have been?

Is there ever an hour in the day when there may not come a letter, a telegram, even he himself (or, if Fate be very kind, *they themselves)* in person? She hardly waits for the maid to open the door before she puts her eager question,

"Any letters?"

"No, miss. There is a gentleman called, miss; he is upstairs with Mrs. King."

"Who is it?"

"I don't know, miss. A stranger; a foreign-looking gentleman."

Calla flies with winged feet part way up the stairs; but on the first landing she pauses. One of those perfectly useless, but very common, and sometimes unaccountable, presentiments that only precede the knowledge of the truth by a few minutes, lays hold on her. She passes slowly up to her own room, trembling so that she has to hold the balusters as she ascends the stairs. She takes off her hat and gloves—slowly. Why hurry to rush

upon evil days? And if the coming days be good—ah! *if!*—if they be good, why has this trembling seized her?—if they be good, what matters a moment more or less?

She tries to draw her breath calmly as she approaches the drawing-room, tries—in vain—to steady her nervous hand as she turns the handle of the door and enters.

Her aunt starts violently as she sees Calla, and looks aghast and helpless, and her eyes are full of tears. The stranger gentleman is there; he rises respectfully, and bows with grave deference; but he, too, looks pale and uncomfortable, and when Mrs. King has said nervously and flurriedly, "This is Miss Yorke," all three are silent.

Calla knows that there are evil tidings. They see that she knows it; but she is thinking—whom do these tidings concern? Julius Lusada would never send a stranger to break to her bad news of Felix. But Felix—can *he* have sent a messenger to

bear bad news of Lusada? It must be Lusada to whom some harm has happened.

"My darling child," begins Mrs. King, brokenly and incoherently, as the stranger evidently looks for her to open the subject, "this gentleman has called—he was a friend of——"

"*Was!*" repeats the girl gaspingly, pressing both hands upon her heart—"a friend of *whom?*"

Before they either of them answer, her eyes have lit upon something upon the table—the gleam of something golden partly folded in a half-open paper. Mrs. King sees she notices it, and instinctively, hurriedly, puts out her hand as if to push it out of Calla's way. But Calla is too quick for her, and has seized it already.

This broad gold locket is Lusada's; she knows it well, and needs not to open it to see whose face is within it. But this—this other locket in enamelled black and gold, with F. G. engraved on it—this

locket she has known since first she loved Felix Grey, and the same face, she knows, used to be concealed within it! It is there still; and with these souvenirs she knows too well that neither of the two men would have parted during life. So, like a flash of lightning, the truth bursts upon her at a blow, and smites her to the heart. She knows that with her own lips she has sealed the doom of all she loved.

Yet she takes it more calmly than they could have hoped. She scarcely speaks, except to beg to be told all; she listens in utter silence and stillness to the story, told by a friend of Lusada's, who, seeking him, had found Angélique lamenting over the dead. Only when he told how, near the heart of each of the two dead men, hidden in each breast, they had found the lockets with the same girl's face (the same fair young face now listening so marble pale and still), and how he had brought them to her, thinking

she would alike treasure them as relics, and receive them as proofs, and how he had at first hesitated as to whether to bring them to her or bury them on the lifeless hearts that had treasured them—then she stopped his story by a wild and piercing cry, and Mrs. King rushed to raise her up as she fell as if lightning had smitten her to the ground—fell not in merciful unconsciousness, but writhing in the convulsion of an anguish which no blessed relief of tears came to soften or to soothe.

She had tried to endure too calmly, and Nature avenged itself on the unnatural restraint by striking her down into one of those paroxysms—such as only follow by reaction on a blow too silently borne—that risk the reason, and lay even life in the balance.

Mental sufferings, like bodily fevers, will run their course and pass through their various phases. The midnight closed round Calla then as if no faintest dawn could

ever glimmer through its blackness. She could see no ray of comfort, but only a deeper shadow, in the thought that none dared utter aloud to her, but that yet unspoken beat in every pulse of her heart, burning deeper in its mute reproach than words could ever brand it—the thought that even had the sacrifice not been made in vain, had Felix come back in safety from the jaws of death, *alone*, between herself and him, giant-like and ghastly, must ever have stood the memory of the life that had been freely risked for his sake at her bidding, lost for him through her. For ever the red shadow of that past must have followed them, and stretched between them a spectral arm that waved them apart. Death could not sever them more than life must surely have done. Could they ever, even were all other barriers between them broken down, have reached hands across that grave?

Days passed, and were dark as nights to

her. When grief had expended its first violent outbreak, and its very passion had exhausted itself, and a dangerous lethargy was insidiously threatening to creep over her—while the numbness of a dull agony held her, body and soul, so that the girl she had been seemed as dead as those for whom she mourned—while yet her family dared scarcely breathe the name of Lusada to her in fear of its effect—one morning she fell asleep, and drifted away from waking sorrows into a fair dreamland.

Since the news fell on her she had only slept to dream of pain and terror, until now. But now she dreamt that she was with Felix on the sands near La Basse-Rive again, and all the clouds that darkened her life had sunk away and left the horizon clear,

"As in the happy time!"

She saw again the yellow burning sands, the low, heath-crowned cliffs, the lazy sea of southern blue. Felix was by her side;

the very book they had been reading on the morning of her betrothal lay open on her lap; she knew and recognised even the cover of that Oriental fairy-tale; every detail of that unforgotten scene reproduced itself clearly as in a photograph. She read the words again,

"I have been beloved by the noblest three on earth."

And Felix, smiling, said, with the old familiar look, though not in the old words, yet as gaily as of old,

"Three! why are you not content with us two? Have we not sufficed?"

Then with a vague sense as of some uncomprehended loss, as if through the veil of the dream that hid her real grief from her there broke some faint glimmer of consciousness of sorrow somewhere, she asked,

"But *where is he?* I never meant him to stay away so long. Will he never come back to us?"

And as if in answer to her wonder, look-

ing up, she saw Lusada coming across the sands to them. Plainly as ever in life she saw the sun catching the tawny gold of his thick curling hair, she met the softening smile of his grave piercing eyes as they rested on her face. She turned from Felix, and sprang towards *him*, and cried, "Have you forgiven me, oh! my love?" and his voice answered,

"Lady mine, I had never anything to forgive."

And even as she stretched her arms towards him, she awoke—awoke with a cry and a sob of disappointment to reality, yet murmuring to herself, as if still in the enthralment of dreamland, still stretching her arms out to the empty air,

"Beloved!—yes, I have been beloved by the noblest two of earth."

From the hour of that brief passing dream the tide began to turn, and bear her slowly back towards consolation and solace. Tennyson seldom wrote truer words than

"It was but a dream; yet it yielded a dear delight
To have looked though but once in a dream upon eyes so fair,
That had been in a weary world my one thing bright!"

She felt no longer utterly lost from them and far away from them. Only a dream! but it had brought them near her. And with them near her, could she despair? Beloved by the noblest! Yes, and in the hour of her need, they two were with her now. When awaking darkly from the first blind agony of grief, she looked around for some light, for some help, it seemed that the true and faithful souls that would have guarded her on earth, answered even now to her call. They were with her in dream-land; their influence was round her in waking hours. The spirit of their love breathed in the air that gave her life, and upheld her as their living presence would have done.

Could she who had loved the strongest faint and fail under any burden? Could

she who had loved the noblest droop into ignoble despair?

There came a day at last when a strange chance—a story told by a stranger, a name, a date, an unsuspicious word dropped by Isabel—revealed to Calla the secret which Felix carried to the grave unuttered. And in the light of this new truth she saw how the web of Destiny had subtly and silently wound them all in its unseen meshes—saw how, from the rash chivalry of one nature, the self-abnegation of the other, the fidelity that, springing from a root of virtue, had done as fatal work as crime, had been woven the triple meshes of the net. All things had worked together to an end. They had followed their fate, and she stood alone, with half a life before her, and love and joy behind.

Yet on the field whence every hope of joy for self, every dream and scheme for self have been wrenched up by the roots,

fair flowers of self-sacrifice and ministration spring and bloom. Calla's life is not wasted—will not be wasted whilst there is suffering in the world. There are fevered brows for her gentle hand to cool; stormy, sorrowful hearts for her tender sympathy to soothe; sluggish, inert minds for her yet unquenched spirit to kindle to responsive fire; groping souls struggling towards the light for her to take by the hand and help. She has taken no vow, joined no sisterhood, shuts herself apart in no seclusion from the world. No outward token tells that she has put away all dreams of her own future and dedicated herself to others. But wheresoever sorrow and suffering call, there Calla is found.

There is a place for her to fill; there is work enough for her heart and hand. There is still the chance that no woman young and beautiful (out of a convent) can exclude absolutely and entirely from the possibilities of her life.

But those who know her best will feel amazement in their inmost hearts if Calla Yorke should ever marry or listen more to words of love.

THE END.

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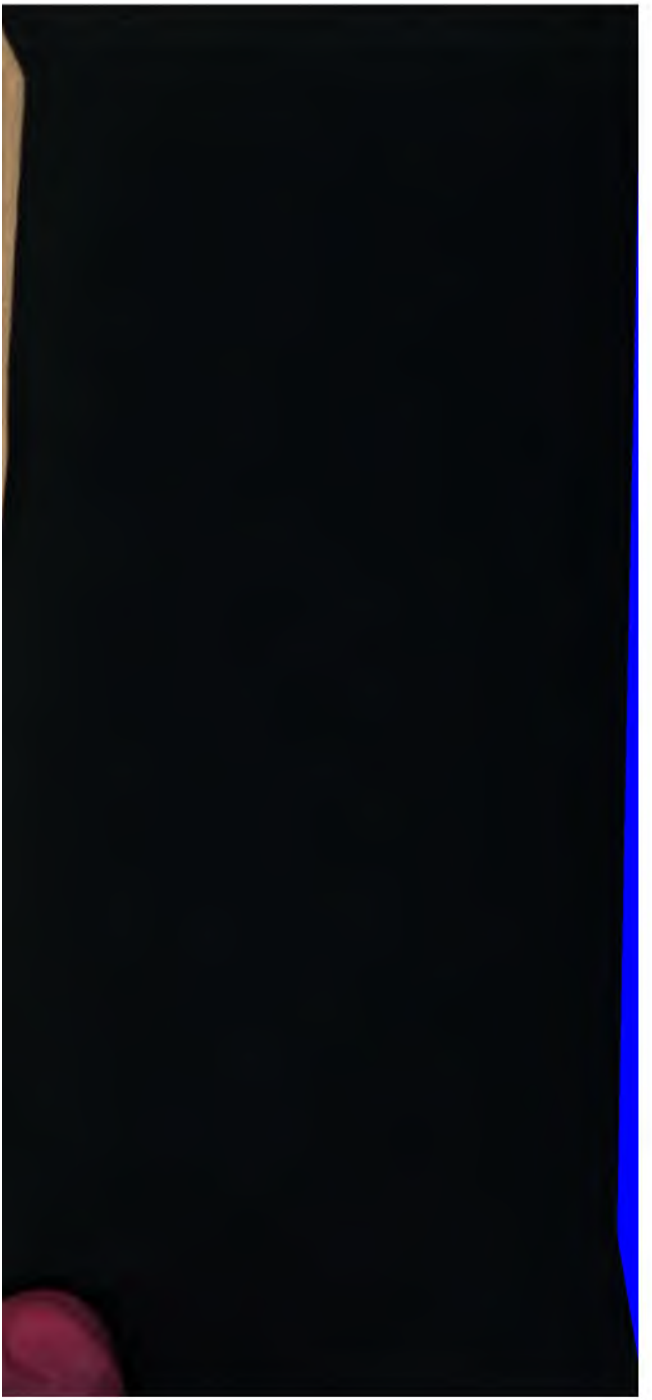
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